South Haven Tribune

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May 31, 2026

There are eight lifeguard candidates currently in training for the new lifeguard program in South Haven.

Lifeguards return to South Haven

By JULIE NEWELL
SH Tribune Editor

SOUTH HAVEN — Lifeguards have returned to South Haven more than two decades after the city's lifeguard program ended.

Last week, the new lifeguard candidates took part in joint training drills that simulated water rescue scenarios with the South Haven Police Department and South Haven Area Emergency Services.

"We're excited for our lifeguards to be out on the beach," Police Chief Adam DeBoer said. "I think, being involved in the training, we have a good group of guards that are ready to hit the water."

There are eight lifeguard candidates currently in training in South Haven.

"For the guards who aren't already Red Cross certified, we make sure they get that certification so they build the basics of lifeguarding and learning those skills," Chief Lifeguard David Figueredo said. "Once they have obtained their Red Cross certification and done all the prerequisite swims ... they go through our two-week intensive lifeguard academy."

Photos by Julie Newell / Tribune Editor

The new South Haven lifeguard candidates take part in a joint training drill that simulated water rescue scenarios.

The training the candidates go through includes the basics of water rescue, on-land first aid, prevention, surveillance, how to operate in treacherous surf environments to make those rescues.

"Then that's coupled with classroom sessions to teach them about everything they need to know about being a surf lifeguard," Figueredo said.

As of Memorial Day, South Beach will be the only beach in South Haven that will have lifeguards.

"I'm super excited to launch this on South Beach," Figueredo said. "Our guards have been working very hard, training for two weeks in cold – we've really put them through the ringer."

Lifeguards will be on the beach from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. every day.

"Coming here, I was met with a lot of folks who were willing and able to help, the team rallied around me and made it easy for me to implement this program,"

See LIFEGUARDS, page A2

Parent raises bullying concerns at SH schools

By JULIE NEWELL
SH Tribune Editor

SOUTH HAVEN — Parents spoke out Wednesday night during a South Haven school board meeting about incidents that have occurred at Baseline Middle School.

Fifi Myklebust, a parent of one of the district's students, said she and other parents are frustrated with how the school has handled the incidents and the restructuring that recently took place where the middle school assistant principal was moved to a newly created position.

"This year especially, our family, especially with Baseline Middle School, we have experienced significant frustration with how our serious concerns were handled by school administration," Myklebust said. "Communication was always inconsistent, policy was lacking and we ultimately lost confidence that student safety concerns were being properly addressed."

She and several other parents decided to remove their children from Baseline Middle School due to safety concerns and incidents of bullying toward their children, which she said no action was taken by the district.

"Many parents are not simply frustrated, they are worried," Myklebust said. "Worried about repeated behavioral incidents, worried about what their children are experiencing during the school day and worried whether warning signs are being taken seriously before situations escalate further."

Myklebust said she removed her child before the school's spring break after an incident occurred where her child called her scared and crying.

"We went to the school and we had a meeting with both principals and one thing I will never forget about is that the principal said to me that she felt he was overexaggerating," Myklebust said. "No child should feel unsafe walking through hallways, sitting in classrooms, eating lunch or using the restroom because of threats, intimidation, bullying or disruptive behavior from other students."

Teacher of the year

Barb Raak was named teacher of the year, and received recognition for the award Wednesday night.

"I'm not done yet," Raak said. "It's just my passion; I love it (and) that's what I'm here for."

Raak has worked in education for 33 years, with 30 of those years being at South Haven Public Schools.

Fund transfer

The board discussed the at-risk transfer from the general fund to the food service fund that happens yearly.

"It is a requirement to remain eligible for our at-risk funds," Finance Administrator Nancy Nelson said. "We have to pay any amount up to $10 per economically disadvantaged student to the food service fund out of the general fund."

Nelson said the district has just under 1,200 students this year for this fund.

The item will be brought back for a vote at the next board meeting.

Other items

The school board approved the purchase of technology devices for the 2026-27 school year that would include desktop computers, monitors, iPads and laptops.

The devices are estimated to cost about $60,000, which would come out of the technology sustainability fund that is made up of leftover bond resources and other funds set aside for technology purposes.

The board approved three trips including:

■ History Club trip for the national competition.

■ The boys' basketball overnight trip.

■ The girls' basketball overnight trip.

The board approved the 2026-27 school year calendar, the Van Buren Intermediate School District budget and the formation of a professional development committee.

The board approved the alignment of district resources with the district's strategic plan.

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104

Dredging underway in SH harbor

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The United States Army Corps of Engineering recently began hydraulic dredging operations in the waters located between the South Haven piers and at the mouth of the harbor.

According to a news release, crews are expected to complete the dredging work by July.

"Navigation through the harbor will remain open throughout the project as crews work to remove accumulated sand from the channel-bottom and pier heads," the release stated.

The dredged material will be transported to waters off South Beach for beach nourishment efforts.

This dredging project will accomplish two major objectives including:

■ Deepen the navigable channel into and out of the harbor, improving access and safety for recreational and commercial vessels.

■ Relocate sand to South Beach to support beach nourishment efforts and strengthen coastal resilience along the shoreline.

Whitmer says she won't run for president in 2028

By JOEY CAPPELLETTI
Associated Press

MACKINAC ISLAND, Mich. — Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan put to rest speculation about a potential 2028 presidential bid, saying Thursday that she will not join what is expected to be a crowded primary field after leaving office at the end of this year.

WHITMER

Whitmer has long been viewed by some Democrats as a possible White House contender after her decisive election victories in the closely contested state that Republican Donald Trump has carried twice in presidential votes. For months, however, Whitmer had offered only cautious answers about her political future.

But she delivered her clearest response yet in an interview Thursday with Fox 2 Detroit.

"I think there will be a robust group of people running for president. I will not be one of them in 2028," Whitmer said.

Her comments came during Michigan's annual Mackinac policy conference, where Whitmer is set to be honored and deliver remarks later Thursday.

Whitmer has previously said she plans to take time before deciding on her next move politically.

"I don't know that I'll put my name on the ballot again. I'm just not sure," Whitmer said at an April breakfast in Detroit. "But I also am 54 years old. I got a lot of gas in the tank."

The Mackinac conference has become a hub of presidential speculation, with former Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and U.S. Sen. Elissa Slotkin – both considered possible 2028 contenders – also in attendance.

The Tribune: Celebrating Our 127th Year

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OBITUARIES

Ralph C. Tubbs

Jan. 7, 1933 – Jan. 2, 2026

He was born Jan. 7, 1933, in South Haven to Charles Tubbs and Louise (Nielsen) Tubbs.

He graduated from South Haven High School in 1950. He married Claudia J. Meyer on July 25, 1953. Ralph was in the U.S. Army from March 1953 to March 1955.

As a graphic artist he worked mostly at the South Haven Daily Tribune until he was able to become a partner at The Service Press, then later owning the company, renaming it Tubbs Printing. After selling the business, Ralph and Claudia moved to Green Lake, Wis., for a job opportunity, spending 20 years there. Ralph finished his working career at EP Direct Econoprint. Ralph and Claudia retired in 2003 and moved to Brooksville, Fla. He was a very hardworking man and would help anyone.

He was preceded in death by his son, Niel, in 2010 and wife Claudia, in 2015; one brother, Edward Tubbs; three sisters: Lois Tubbs, Dona Moritti and Dora Hamilton. Also, two sisters-in-law: Peggy (Campbell) Tubbs and Charlotte (Meyer) Strebeck and four brothers-in-law: Robert Brambley, Martin Strebeck, Clifford Hamilton and Daniel Moritti.

Survived by three sons: Andrew (Terri), Brian, Steven and one sister, Susan Brambley; five grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren and one great-great-grand child and a host of nieces and nephews.

A memorial service will be at 11:30 a.m. on Thursday, June 11, at Lakeview Cemetery in South Haven. There will be a gathering after the service at Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church, 6321 Blue Star Highway, South Haven.

David Julius Allers

March 12, 1935 – May 24, 2026

David J. Allers, of South Haven, Mich. passed away on Sunday, May 24, 2026 surrounded by his loving family. Born on March 12, 1935 in South Haven to Julius and Paula Allers. United in marriage to the late Bette Henry on Feb. 12, 1954.

David is survived by children; Kim (Steve Gannon) Ameluxen, Brenda (Marc) Bertorelli, Tammi (Mark) Dibble, Sandy (Wade) Brooks, 10 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren. Also survived by sister Judy (David) Schlaack.

Preceded in death by his wife of 61 years Bette Allers, parents Julius and Paula, sisters Mary Jean Harbin, Margaret LeBaron and Paula Filbrandt.

David graduated from South Haven High School in 1953 met and married the love of his life Bette and raised four daughters. He worked at Bohn Aluminum as a Quality Assurance Manager.

David lived life to the fullest whether it was out fishing on his boat, cutting down trees and spraying weeds on his property or playing his favorite card game canasta.

A family man, he was kind but stubborn, a German through and through who loved feeding his family by baking delicious blueberry pies and homemade spaghetti sauce and meatballs.

David was a lifetime member of the Elks, Riverbend Boat Club, South Haven Historical Society and a past Rotarian. He was a very active member of the Cushman Club who attended all of their national meets.

David loved to travel and saw the world through his job at Bohn. Never one to sit still, always willing to lend a helping hand to those in need and ready with a list of things needing to be done for others his legacy of strength and service to others will live on through his family. He will be forever missed.

Visitation for David will take place from 6 to 8 p.m. on Sunday, May 31 at Filbrandt Chapel 1076 S. Bailey Ave, South Haven, Michigan 49090. Visitation will continue from 11 a.m. until the time of his funeral service at noon on Monday, June 1, at Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church 06321 Blue Star Highway, South Haven, Michigan. Pastor Travis Wilson will officiate. David will be laid to rest at Lakeview Cemetery.

Donations in honor of David may be made to: The South Haven Senior Center, Wings of Hope Hospice or Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church.

To those who wish to make a leave a memory or condolence please visit: www.starksfamilyfh.com.

Arrangements are entrusted to Filbrandt Chapel-Starks Family Funeral Homes and Cremation Services. 269-637-0333.

Mildred 'Millie' Kelly

March 8, 1943 – May 14, 2026

Mildred Marie "Millie" Upson Kelly, beloved wife, mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, social worker, teacher and friend, passed away surrounded by the love of her family after a long and courageous journey with Parkinson's disease.

Her life was defined by kindness, intelligence, grace, humor and a deep devotion to helping others.

Millie was born on March 8, 1943, in Muskegon, Mich., to Robert and Mildred Upson. She was raised alongside her siblings, Norene and Robert, near Mona Lake and Lake Michigan. Her childhood was filled with simple joys and treasured traditions – swimming, skating, fishing, picking blueberries and picnicking with cousins and friends along the lakeshore.

Millie adored her extended family and especially loved being an aunt to her nieces, Debbie and Brenda. She inherited a love of storytelling, poetry and song from her mother, who passed down family traditions through stories and recitations shared among neighbors and relatives.

After graduating from high school, Millie attended Muskegon Community College, where she met the love of her life, Stephen Kelly. The two married and built a family in Grand Rapids, Mich. They welcomed two daughters, Karen (Chris) Koch and Colleen (Tom) Dailey.

Millie dedicated her professional life to helping others. She earned two master's degrees and worked as a mental health counselor, school social worker and special education teacher specializing in emotionally impaired children. Her compassion, patience and empathy touched countless lives.

Eventually returning to South Haven, Millie found her greatest joy in being a grandmother to Ellen, Shayla, Tom and Maya. She was an active and devoted grandma, spending endless hours at the beach, baking, teaching card games and creating poems and stories for her grandchildren.

In 1998, Millie was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. Determined to help others despite her own challenges, she participated in a National Institutes of Health study and founded a Parkinson's support group in South Haven, where she formed lasting friendships and offered encouragement and support to countless individuals and families facing the disease.

Throughout her journey, Millie faced every challenge with extraordinary positivity, dignity, grace and kindness. In recognition of his unwavering devotion and advocacy during her final years, her husband Steve was honored as Caregiver of the Year 2024 by the Area Agency on Aging for the exceptional care he provided as Millie required full-time support.

Millie will be remembered for her loving spirit, gentle wisdom, empathy, intelligence, sense of humor and the countless ways she made others feel seen, valued and loved. Her legacy lives on in the family she cherished, the lives she touched and the many memories shared by all who knew her.

She will be deeply missed and forever remembered with love.

To those who choose to leave a memory or condolence please visit: www.starksfamilyfh.com.

Arrangements are entrusted to Filbrandt Chapel-Starks Family Funeral Homes and Cremation Services. 269-637-0333.

Jordan Christian Moreno

May 26, 1999 – May 23, 2026

Jordan Christian Moreno, of South Haven, Mich. passed away on May 23, 2026. Born on May 26, 1999 in South Haven to Jamie Moreno and Shurice (Kuenzli) Smith.

Jordan is survived by his children; Jamie-Christian Moreno, Jordan Christian Moreno, Sebastian Joseph Moreno, father Jamie Moreno, mother Shurice (Jason) Smith. Also survived by his siblings; Jimmy Moreno, Jaime Moreno and Alexis (Santana Contreras) Moreno.

Preceded in death by his grandfather Jose Moreno and Uncle Jimmy Moreno.

Jordan lived big and loved bigger. He cherished his boys and his family and loved spending time with both. He had a laughter that was contagious and a smile that lit up the room.

Jordan worked in the Moreno family construction business. He was motivated and a hard worker. He was a creative visionary with dreams larger than life. Outgoing, honest and straightforward, Jordan was generous to a fault. He loved to pay it forward at restaurants and gas stations, always looking out for the less fortunate.

He had a passion for cars, motorcycles and loved collecting knives and crystal rocks. He is already and forever will be dearly missed by his family and friends.

Visitation for Jordan will be from 11 a.m. till the time of his funeral service at noon on Tuesday, June 2 from 11 a.m. at the Filbrandt Chapel 1076 S. Bailey Ave, South Haven, Michigan 49090. Royce Kuenzli will officiate. Jordan will be laid to rest in Robinson Cemetery, Gobles, Mich.

To those who choose to leave a memory or condolence please visit: www.starksfamilyfh.com.

Arrangements are entrusted to Filbrandt Chapel-Starks Family Funeral Homes and Cremation Services. 269-637-0333.

www.southhaventribune.net

Photos by Julie Newell / Tribune Editor

The new South Haven lifeguard candidates participate in a joint training activity that simulated water rescue scenarios.

The lifeguard candidates debrief with Fire Chief Brandon Hinz after a joint training drill on the beach in South Haven.

LIFEGUARDS

From page A1

Figueredo said. "I couldn't have done it without the help of our folks here at the city, Chief DeBoer, SHPD, SHAES, beach enforcement – they've all been critical in helping put this together."

Another change to the beach safety is inflatable flotation devices will no longer be allowed at the South Haven beaches.

Figueredo said anyone visiting the beach is encourage to ask the lifeguards questions about beach safety and the conditions of the beach.

"I just want to advise people coming to South Beach to enjoy the guarded beaches, please don't be afraid to ask us about water conditions if you're unsure," Figueredo said. "We're happy to educate people. If you can, try to find a lifeguard not on surveillance.

"We'll have lifeguards on break, still remaining rescue ready who are equipped to have at-length conversations, but you can always go up to a lifeguard stand and ask for advice on if it's safe to swim and where it's safe to swim."

The city's lifeguard program had been active from the late 1930s until it was terminated in 2001.

However, at the South Haven City Council meeting on April 7, 2025, U.S. Lifesaving Association National

Police Chief Adam DeBoer and Chief Lifeguard David Figueredo do lead a joint training drill for the lifeguard candidates on Thursday.

Certification Committee Chair Chris Brewster gave an aquatic safety assessment and recommendation report to city leadership. According to the report, there have been 12 drowning deaths in South Haven since the program ended.

The city's previous lifeguard program had been active from the late 1930s until it was terminated in 2001.

In 2025, the South Haven City Council made the creation of a lifeguard program a top priority.

In May of 2025, the city hired Double Haul Solutions as consultants to design and implement a lifeguard program.

On Nov. 17, 2025, the council approved city staff to work to create a funding strategy, implement the system, processes and hiring practices for phase one of the lifeguard program.

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104

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Meet our Pets of the Week, Crookedy!

Crookedy is a one-of-a-kind senior pup with a personality that's impossible to forget. He enjoys the simple things in life: casual strolls, quality time with his people, and a good play session when the mood strikes. His toy of choice? Extra-large Kongs, of course. Crookedy is the kind of dog who leaves a lasting impression. If you are interested in adopting Crookedy, please fill out an adoption survey at al-van.org/adopt.

Furry 5K

It's time to lace up and leash up! Registration is now open for Al-Van Humane Society's annual Furry 5K & 1-Mile Walk, scheduled for June 27th! Enjoy a scenic run or walk along the Van Buren Trail and bring your four-legged running buddy along for the fun. Whether you're racing for a personal best or just out for a relaxed stroll with your dog, this event is a great way to support the animals at Al-Van Humane Society. Participants can look forward to: Custom finisher medals, age group awards and special awards for top overall and masters runners.
To register visit our website at al-van.org/adopt.

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South Haven's South Beach named best in Michigan

By TRIBUNE STAFF

Julie Newell / Tribune Editor

South Haven's South Beach has been named Best Beach in Michigan by USA TODAY's 10 Best Readers' Choice Awards.

SOUTH HAVEN — South Haven's South Beach has been named Best Beach in Michigan by USA TODAY's 10 Best Readers' Choice Awards.

According to a news release, by winning this award, South Beach earns statewide recognition as one of Lake Michigan's most well-known shoreline destinations.

Located just south of the South Pier and South Haven's historic red lighthouse, South Beach is known for its wide sandy shoreline, walkable access to downtown and one of the most recognizable views on Michigan's west coast – the South Haven Lighthouse and catwalk.

"For more than 100 years, South Haven has been a place where families come to make summer memories, and South Beach remains one of the most beloved parts of that tradition," Executive Director of Visit South Haven Jen Sistrunk said in the release. "Generations of visitors have walked the pier, watched the sunset, played along the shoreline, and returned year after year. This recognition honors not only a beautiful beach, but South Haven's lasting place as one of Michigan's classic resort towns."

The award comes during a milestone summer for South Haven beaches. New this year, lifeguards have returned to South Beach for the first time in 25 years, adding another layer of support for residents and visitors enjoying Lake Michigan.

"South Beach isn't just a beautiful place to spend the day – it's a beach designed for everyone," South Haven City Manager Kate Hosier said in the release. "It's accessibility features, family-friendly atmosphere and iconic lakeshore setting helped earn this well-deserved recognition as the best beach in the state."

South Beach amenities include a playground, splash pad, concession stand, kayak and paddleboard rentals, free beach wheelchair rentals and six life jacket loaner stations.

South Haven is home to seven public beaches and access sites, with North Beach and South Beach recognized as the community's largest and most frequently used beaches. South Beach's location near downtown shops, restaurants, the harbor and summer events makes it a central part of the South Haven visitor experience.

The recognition also highlights the importance of beach destinations to Michigan's broader visitor economy.

According to Travel Michigan, Michigan tourism generated $54.8 billion in total economic impact in 2024, including more than $30 billion in visitor spending, and supported more than 350,000 jobs statewide. South Haven's beaches, downtown, harbor, trails, events and small businesses all play a role in that statewide tourism story.

Visitors can explore South Beach at 60 Water Street in South Haven, just steps from downtown South Haven and the Black River harbor.

Free screening of 'Old Heart' at Lake Michigan College

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The First Hebrew Congregation of South Haven, Lily of the Valley Church in Covert and Temple B'nai Shalom in St. Joseph are co-hosting a free screening of the film entitled "Old Heart," on June 22.

According to a news release, the screening will take place at 6:30 p.m. at Lake Michigan College, South Haven campus.

"More than a love story, the film highlights the heroic efforts of the many American Black soldiers who fought during WWll in the occupied Netherlands, saving the lives of hundreds of Jews, resistant fighters and Dutch citizens," the release stated.

This past fall, the U.S. Military Cemetery in the Netherlands removed the special panels detailing this historical story. This screening is part of an effort to have the panels and the history of those Black soldiers restored.

"The community is invited to view the film and to hear from the filmmakers about why this film is significant today," the release stated.

The movie was filmed in Michigan and the Netherlands which includes 23 Michigan actors and has won eight best feature awards.

Lake Michigan College is located at 125 Veterans Blvd in South Haven.

To make a reservation, email shapirolerner@gmail.com.

For more information about the film, visit oldheartmovie.com.

Art exhibition celebrates caregiving stories

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The Arts and Aging Partnership of Southwest Michigan recently announced a national juried exhibition opening June 20 at the South Haven Center for the Arts.

According to a news release, 26 artists from 12 states were selected by a collaborative team from the Campus for Creative Aging and the South Haven Center for the Arts for their work that explores the joys, hardships and everyday realities of caregiving and receiving at all of life's phases.

The exhibition "Care" reflects on the impact of caregiving for both those who provide care and those who receive care.

"There is a breadth and depth to the way these artists have approached the theme," South Haven Center for the Arts Executive Director Kerry Hagy said in the release.

Wyoming, Mich., artist Samantha Vanrandan's painting "Held Elseware" explores the care given as a step-parent to a teenager.

Oil painting "53 and 75" by Albany, Ga., artist Patrick Foster reflects on the change in his identity as he has become the sole caregiver to his mother, who has dementia.

Sharon Vance created a portrait of her mother, also her caregiver, made from Legos titled "Always There."

"My mother cared for me when I was too young to care for myself, watched anxiously as I struggled through those trying teen years and cared for my children as I worked as a young adult," Vance said in the release. "Now that she's at an age where she should be relaxing and enjoying life, she's become my caregiver as I navigate the challenges as a middle-aged adult with slow progressing ALS."

Tender moments of caregiving are also explored in "Window to our World," a community art project which began in 2024 and has resulted in 30 art pieces made by area care partners (caregivers and receivers) which will be exhibited at the South Haven art center concurrently with "Care."

An opening reception for both exhibitions will be held from 2 to 4 p.m. on June 20 at the South Haven Center for the Arts, 600 Phoenix St., South Haven. Complementary refreshments will be provided.

"Together, we can inspire change and build a community where every caregiver is seen, supported, and celebrated," Campus for Creative Aging Coordinator Jess Kolbe said in the release. "Join us while we harness the arts to mobilize community action, fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment for all of our caregivers."

A community conversation is scheduled for 5:30 to 7 p.m. on July 14 at the South Haven art center.

"This is an opportunity to engage with a panel of caregivers, care recipients and artists around the exhibition and its topic of caregiving," the release stated.

A concert with Andrea Cheeseman, called "Loss, Stillness and Waiting for Acceptance" will be held at 6 p.m. on July 28 in the South Haven art center gallery.

Both "Care" and "Window to Our World" will be on display from June 20 to Aug. 1.

For more information about "Care," go to southhavenarts.org.

To learn more about the Arts and Aging Partnership, go to areaagencyonaging.org/arts-aging-partnership.

These exhibitions and events have been made possible in part by funding from the Michigan Arts and Culture Council, The South Haven Area Community Foundation and Edward Jones Office of Paul Hix.

SWMI housing market posts increase in selling prices

By TONY WITTKOWSKI
Paxton Media Group

More than 200 homes were sold in April, marking a first for the year in the Southwest Michigan housing market.

According to a report from the Southwestern Michigan Association of Realtors, year-to-date sales were down for the fourth consecutive month in 2026 compared to 2025.

However, the average selling price in April and year-to-date price were the highest in the year-over-year comparison dating back to 2006. Year-to-date, the total dollar volume was down 18 percent at the end of April. The inventory of homes for sale did not increase to the level of listings in April 2025.

"The number of houses sold in April increased by 3 percent from sales in April 2025," said Luke Jeffries, association executive, Southwestern Michigan Association of Realtors. "The year-to-date sales decreased 13 percent."

The average selling price for houses in April crept up slightly by 1 percent from April 2025. The average sales price year-to-date rose by 6 percent to $396,133 from $372,068 in April 2025.

Despite the rise in average selling price, the April 2026 median selling price fell 13 percent, and the year-to-date median selling price dropped 8 percent from April 2025.

The total dollar volume, with fewer sales, plummeted 7 percent in April to $77,694,756 from the $83,893,695 in April 2025. Year-to-date, the total dollar volume has fallen 18 percent.

In April 2026, the market ended with an inventory of 827 houses for sale, down from 841 in April 2025. Jeffries said the good news is homebuyers in Allegan, Berrien, Cass and Van Buren counties have a 5.1-month supply of homes, up from 3.8 in March 2026. This figure marks the highest supply level for 2026.

The Freddie Mac mortgage rate in April was 6.30, down from 6.46, in March for a 30-year conventional mortgage.

There was just one bank-owned or foreclosed home as a percentage of all transactions in April.

Across the country

Existing-home sales increased by 0.2 percent month-over-month in April, according to the National Association of Realtors existing-home sales report.

The report provides the real estate ecosystem – including agents, homebuyers and sellers – with data on the level of home sales, price and inventory.

Month-over-month sales increased in the Midwest and the South, were unchanged in the Northeast, and declined in the West. On a year-over-year basis, sales rose in the South, were flat in the West, and fell in the Northeast and Midwest.

"Despite mixed macroeconomic signals – including a record-high stock market and historically low consumer confidence – home sales were modestly boosted by the continued improvement in housing affordability," said NAR Chief Economist Lawrence Yun. "Mortgage rates are lower than a year ago, and average income growth is outpacing home price gains."

Yun said the inventory still remains tight as multiple offers – though not as intense as a few years ago – are still occurring.

"At the same time, days on market are lengthening on average, implying that consumers are taking their time before making decisions," Yun said. "The increase in second-home purchases reflects stronger finances among higher-income households, as well as the post-COVID rise in remote work and hybrid job schedules."

Total existing-home sales increased 2 percent to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 4.02 million in April. Year-over-year, sales fell by 1 percent.

The median existing-home price for all housing types in April was $417,700, up 0.9 percent increase from one year ago – the 34th consecutive month of year-over-year price increases.

In the Midwest, existing-home sales increased 2.2 percent in April compared to March to an annual rate of 950,000. Sales were down 1 percent compared to a year ago. The median price in the Midwest was $324,500, up 3.6 percent from April 2025.

Total housing inventory at the end of April increased to 1.47 million units, up 5.8 percent from March and 1.4 percent from April 2025. Unsold inventory sits at a 4.4-month supply of unsold houses, up from 4.2 months last month and up from 4.3 months one year ago.

Contact: twittkowski@TheHP.com, 932-0358.

Visit us online at
www.southhaventribune.net

Notice of Public Hearing on Increasing Property Taxes

The City Council of the City of Bangor will hold a public hearing on a proposed increase of 0.4500 mills in the operating tax millage rate to be levied on property in 2026.

The hearing will be held on the 15th day of June 2026 at 7:00 pm at Bangor City Hall, 257 W Monroe St. Bangor, MI 49013.

The date and location of the meeting to take action on the proposed additional millage will be announced at this public meeting.

If adopted, the proposed additional millage will increase operating revenues from ad valorem property taxes 2.70% over such revenues generated by levies permitted without holding a hearing. If the proposed additional millage rate is not approved, the operating revenue will increase by 2.66% over the preceding year's operating revenue.

The taxing unit publishing this notice, and identified below, has complete authority to establish the number of mills to be levied from within its authorized millage rate.
This notice is published by: City of Bangor

257 W Monroe St
Bangor, MI 49013
269-427-5831

NOTICE OF A PUBLIC HEARING ON INCREASING PROPERTY TAXES

The Board of Education of South Haven Public Schools will hold a public hearing on a proposed increase of 1.0116 mills in the operating tax millage rate to be levied on property in 2026.

The hearing will be heold on Wednesday, June 10, 2026 at 6:30 p.m. at the South Haven High School Integrated Learning Center located at 600 Elkenburg, South Haven, Michigan 49090.

The date and location of the meeting to take action on the propsed additional millage will be announced at this public meeting.

If adopted, the proposed additional millage will increase operating revenues from ad valorem property taxes 5.95% over such revenues generated by levies permitted without holding a hearing. If the proposed additional millage rate is not approved, the operating revenue will increase by 3.02% over the preceding year's operating revenue.

The taxing unit publishing this notice, and identified below, has complete authority to establish the number of mills to be levied from within its authorized millage rate.

This notice is published by:

South Haven Public Schools
554 Green Street
South Haven, Michigan 49090
Phone: (269) 637-0500

South Haven Tribune CLASSIFIEDS

Classified Desk: 1-855-317-4292
Hours: Monday - Friday 9am-2pm EST

0100 ANNOUNCEMENTS

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0900 LEGALS

STATE OF MICHIGAN
36TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT
JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
Van Buren COUNTY

CASE NO & JUDGE
2026-075681-DO
Hon. Judge Susan Metzger

ORDER REGARDING ALTERNATE SERVICE

Court address:
212 E. Paw Paw St.,
Paw Paw, MI 49079
Court phone no.
(269)657-8200

Robin Seltenreich
Plaintiff(s).

Wesley Todd (P74571)
136 E. Michigan Ave., Ste 800
Kalamazoo, MI 49007
(269)267-1655
Plaintiff's Attorney

V.

James Seltenreich
935B Phoenix St.
South Haven, MI 49090
Defendant(s).

THE COURT FINDS:
Service of process upon the defendant, James Seltenreich cannot reasonably be made as provided in MCR 2.105, and service of process may be made in a manner that is reasonably calculated to give the defendant actual notice of the proceedings and an opportunity to be heard.
IT IS ORDERED:
Service of the summons and complaint Order re: Alternate Service and a copy of this order shall be made by the following method(s).: First class mail and tacking or firmly affixing to the door at 935B Phoenix St. South Haven, MI 49090. Publishing for three consecutive weeks in the Van Buren County Legal News pursuant to MCR 2.106. For each method used, proof of service must be filed promptly with the court.

/s/ Susan Metzger, 05/04/2026

CITY OF BANGOR
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The City of Bangor will hold a public hearing on the proposed city **budget for fiscal year 2026-2027** at the Bangor City Hall, 257 W. Monroe St. Bangor, MI on **June 15th, 2026** during the Regular City Council Meeting directly after the scheduled hearing on property taxes at **7:00 pm**. A copy of the proposed budget is available for public inspection at Bangor City Hall.

These meetings are accessible. Persons requiring auxiliary aides and services, or other accommodations, should contact the City Clerk in writing, by telephone at 269-427-5831, or by emailing clerk@cityofbangormi.gov

This notice is published by:
Bangor City
257 W. Monroe St
Bangor, MI 49013

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0900 LEGALS

PUBLICATION NOTICE TO CREDITORS
DECEDENT'S TRUST ESTATE

STATE OF MICHIGAN,
COUNTY OF VAN BUREN
In the Matter of Michael J. Eisenlohr Trust dated 12/17/2004.
Decedent's date of birth: 7/6/1955

TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS: Your interest in this matter may be barred or affected by the following: The decedent, Michael J. Eisenlohr, lived in Van Buren County, Michigan, and died on 5/12/2026. Creditors of the deceased are notified that all decedent's assets were held by the Trustee at decedent's death, and the decedent has no probate estate. Creditors of the deceased are further notified that all claims against the trust estate will be forever barred unless presented to: Carmen K. Sine, Trustee and/or the attorney's office representing Carmen K. Sine as Trustee within 4 months of the publication of this notice. This notice is published pursuant to MCL 700.7608. If a probate estate is opened in the future for the decedent, this notice is intended to satisfy the requirements of MCL 700.3801. Notice is further given that the trust estate will be thereafter assigned and distributed to the person(s) entitled to it.

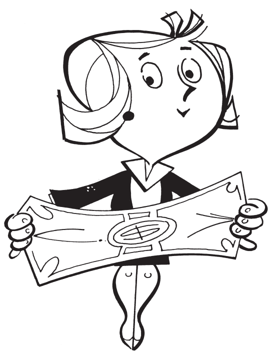
HOUSLEY PETERS LAW OFFICE PC

Date: 5/26/2026

Diane K. Peters P52818
Attorney name Bar No.
905 W. Michigan Ave., Suite A
Address
Marshall, Michigan 49068
City, state, zip
(269)248-6500
Telephone no.

Carmen K. Sine
Trustee name
04971 Blue Star Highway
Address
South Haven, MI 49090
City, state, zip
616-402-4379
Telephone no.

MAKE SOME MONEY



IN THE CLASSIFIEDS TODAY!

0900 LEGALS

STATE OF MICHIGAN
VAN BUREN COUNTY

PUBLICATION NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Decedent's Trust Estate

Descendent: Eugen Gawreliuk
Date of Birth: * 06/28/1930

TO ALL CREDITORS: **

NOTICE TO CREDITORS: The decedent, Eugen Gawreliuk who lived at 117 Erie Street, South Haven MI died March 17, 2026, there is no Probate Estate.

Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the Eugen Gawreliuk and Mary M. Gawreliuk Joint Revocable Trust Agreement dated January 25, 2018, as amended, will be forever barred unless presented to: Mary M. Gawreliuk, Trustee c/o John G. VanSlambrouck, 277 South Rose Street, Suite 6000, Kalamazoo, MI 49007 within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

Date: 5/26/2026

Miller, Canfield, Paddock & Stone, PLC
John G. VanSlambrouck P32968
Attorney name Bar no.
277 S. Rose St, Ste 6000
Address
Kalamazoo, MI 49007
City, state, zip
(269) 383-5898
Telephone

Mary M. Gawreliuk, Trustee
Personal representative
c/o John G. VanSlambrouck-277 S. Rose St, Ste 6000
Address
Kalamazoo, MI 49007
City, state, zip

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SELL YOUR ITEMS IN THE CLASSIFIEDS TODAY!

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CITY OF SOUTH HAVEN PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

On Monday, June 22, 2026, the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) for the City of South Haven will hear public comments related to the request(s) below. The public hearing(s) will be held at 7:00 PM at City Hall, 539 Phoenix St, South Haven, concerning the following:

1. 1309 Monroe Blvd – Interpretation
Butzel Long, PC, on behalf of Zeljko and Nicole Bojic, has submitted an application for an interpretation of Sections 2302, 2303, and 2304 of the Zoning Ordinance. The application requests the ZBA to interpret how those sections apply to 1309 Monroe Blvd and to interpret how the addition of a pool expands or intensifies the property's use as an STR. The parcel number for the referenced address is 80-53-270-008-00.

2. 1309 Monroe Blvd – Appeal of Administrative Decision
Butzel Long, PC, on behalf of Zeljko and Nicole Bojic, has submitted an application for an appeal of the Zoning Administrator's decision not to issue a zoning permit for a swimming pool at the property located at 1309 Monroe Blvd in the R-1B zoning district. The parcel number for the referenced address is 80-53-270-008-00.

3. 1309 Monroe Blvd – Nonuse/Dimensional Variance
Butzel Long, PC, on behalf of Zeljko and Nicole Bojic, has applied for a nonuse variance seeking relief from Zoning Ordinance Section 2303 regarding nonconforming uses in order to install a swimming pool at a short-term rental. The parcel number for the referenced address is 80-53-270-008-00.

Supporting documentation is available for review at the Building Services office, 539 Phoenix Street, South Haven, MI 49090 during normal business hours. Written comments may be submitted in lieu of or in addition to a personal appearance. Written comments must be received no later than 12 p.m. (noon) on Monday, June 22, 2026. Written comments should be addressed to the ZBA and must be submitted to the Zoning Administrator at kdissette@southhavenmi.gov or via postal mail addressed to the ZBA and sent to 539 Phoenix Street, South Haven, MI 49090.

Individuals requesting reasonable accommodation for impairments or disabilities should contact the Zoning Administrator no later than five days prior to the public hearing in person at City Hall, at 269-637-0760, or at kdissette@southhavenmi.gov.

Kelly Getman-Dissette
Zoning Administrator
(269) 637-0760
kdissette@southhavenmi.gov

NOTICE OF BUDGET PUBLICHEARING
COVERT TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Covert Township Board will hold a public hearing on the proposed township budget for fiscal year 2026-2027 at:

Covert Township Hall, 73943 Lake St, Covert, MI 49043
Tuesday, June 9 at 6:00 PM.

The property tax millage rate proposed to be levied to support the proposed budget will be a subject of this hearing.

Proposed Tax Millage Rate:
OPERATING……….……….0.8198
FIRE/AMB……………………1.7000
POLICE…………………………1.9000
ROADS………………………..0.5000

A copy of the budget is available for public inspection during normal business hours at the Covert Township Hall, 73943 Lake St, Covert, MI 49043

This notice is posted in compliance with the Open Meetings Act, Public Act 267 of 1976, as amended, (MCL 41.72a(2)(3)) and the Americans With Disabilities Act.

The Covert Township Board will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services, such as signers for the hearing impaired and audio recordings of printed materials being considered at the meeting, to individuals with disabilities at the meeting or public hearing upon 7 day notice to the Covert Township Board. Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact the Township Board by writing or calling the following: Wednesday Pritchard, Township Clerk, *clerk@coverttwp.com*, *269-764-8986 ext. 2*

Township Clerk Signature: *Wednesday Pritchard* Date Posted: May 20, 2026

A copy of this notice is on file in the Clerk's Office, located at: 73943 Lake St, Covert, MI 49043

NOTICE: CASCO TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES
BUDGET HEARING
Monday, June 15th, 2026, at 7:00 PM
IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE REGULAR MEETING

Notice is hereby given that a public hearing of the Township of Casco, Allegan County, State of Michigan, will be held at the Casco Township Hall, 7104 107th Avenue beginning immediately after the Regular Meeting on Monday, June 15th, 2026.

At such time in accordance with the law, a budget covering proposed expenditures and revenues of the Township will be submitted for consideration.

The property tax millage rate proposed to be levied to support the proposed budget will be a subject of this hearing.

A copy of the proposed budget is available for viewing at the Casco Township Hall during normal business hours and posted in the foyer of the Casco Township Hall. Copies are available on the website, www.cascotownship.org, and by emailing the clerk, clerk@cascotownship.org. Immediately following the conclusion of the Regular Meeting, the Budget Hearing will be convened, on the agenda of which is to approve the 2026/2027 Fiscal Year Budget.

Necessary and reasonable aids for disabled persons will be made available with sufficient notice to the clerk.

Rachel Ridley, Casco Township Clerk

CITY OF SOUTH HAVEN
Proceedings of the Regular City Council Meeting
Council Chambers, City Hall 7:00 p.m. May 18, 2026
THE FOLLOWING ARE NOT APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

Present: Jeff Arnold, Tom Capps, Dave Flack, Mary Hosley, Eddie Polk, Letitia Wilkins, Annie Brown
Absent: None
Call to Order by Mayor Annie Brown at 7:00 p.m.
Moved by Arnold to approve the agenda. Seconded by Polk. Motion was adopted unanimously.
Community updates included proclamations for Jay and Gwen DeBruyn, State of the Industry Report by Visit South Haven Executive Director Jen Sistrunk, and an update on small businesses by Roxanne Leder.
Public Comment excluding items scheduled for public hearing was held.
Moved by Hosley to approve the Consent Agenda Items B, C, E, and F. Seconded by Flack. Roll Call Vote: Yes: Arnold, Capps, Flack, Hosley, Polk, Wilkins, Brown. No: None. Motion adopted.
Moved by Hosley to amend City Council regular minutes from May 4, 2026 number 15 to state "Councilmembers" instead of "Brown" regarding concerns. Seconded by Flack. Voted Yes: Capps, Flack, Hosley, Polk, Wilkins, Brown. Voted No: Arnold. Motion adopted.
Moved by Hosley to approve the amended City Council minutes from May 4, 2026, seconded by Flack. Roll Call Vote taken: Yes: Arnold, Capps, Flack, Hosley, Polk, Wilkins, Brown. No: none. Motion adopted.
Moved by Flack to adopt City Council priorities for FY 2026-2027, seconded by Polk. Motion adopted unanimously.
Moved by Arnold, second by Wilkins to open a public hearing regarding FY 2026-2027 Budget. Motion adopted unanimously.
Moved by Arnold, second by Polk to close the public hearing regarding FY 2026-2027 Budget. Motion adopted unanimously.
Moved by Hosley, second by Arnold to approve Special Event 2026-17, South Haven 4th of July Parade, to be held on Saturday, July 4, 2026, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Motion adopted unanimously.
Motion by Arnold, second by Polk to appoint the following individuals i through xiv to the respective boards and commissions with terms beginning June 1, 2026
i. Jordan Alsup to the Downtown Development Authority for a 4-year term
ii. Ryan Servatius to the Downtown Development Authority for a 4-year term.
iii. Kevin Conway to the Harbor Commission for a 3-year term.
iv. Mary Kilpatrick-Hall to the Housing Commission for a 5-year term.
v. Patricia Hudson to the Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum Board for a 3-year term.
vi. Kirk Wiley to the Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum Board for a 3-year term.
vii. Sondra Sutton to the Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum Board for a 3-year term.
viii. Kent Brindley to the Parks Commission for a 3-year term.
ix. David Kingsbury to the Parks Commission for a 3-year term.
x. Ryan Servatius to the Planning Commission for a 3-year term.
xi. Clark Gruber to the Planning Commission for a 3-year term.
xii. Bob Sherman to the Planning Commission for a 3-year term.
xiii. Brian Sheehy to the South Haven Water Sewer Authority for a 4-year term.
xiv. Lisa Stegall to the Zoning Board of Appeals for a 3-year term as an alternate.
A Roll Call Vote was taken. Voted Yes: Flack, Polk, Arnold, Capps, Brown. Voted No: Hosley, Wilkins. Motion carried.
Motion by Hosley, second by Capps to approve Resolution 2026-18, A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE 2026 UPDATES TO THE CITY OF SOUTH HAVEN MASTER PLAN. Motion adopted unanimously.
Police Chief Adam DeBoer gave an update regarding various police projects and lifeguard implementation.
City Manager Kate Hosier spoke on ongoing construction efforts in South Haven, the new Clerk and Beach and Parking Enforcement began.
Mayor and Councilpersons shared thoughts and comments.
Meeting adjourned at 8:46 p.m.

Megan Kiker, City Clerk

Classifieds Make A Cash Connection!

29th Annual Cottage Walk tickets on sale now

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN – Tickets are on sale for the 29th annual Cottage Walk, co-sponsored by SHOUT for South Haven and the Scott Club.

According to a news release, the event will take place on June 27 and feature tours of four unique cottages, concluding with a tour of the historic Scott Club.

"This year's featured lineup is an eclectic array of residences unique to our community," Spokesperson Patti Sheppard said in the release. "Participants who are longtime residents of South Haven especially will have an opportunity to take a step back in time with a visit to a converted neighborhood school."

Event attendees are able to visit the cottages at their leisure from noon to 5 p.m. Volunteers at each cottage will provide a historical perspective of the site.

"There will also be an opportunity to experience the accents of a 19th century-style Italianate villa, visit a uniquely constructed modular home and enjoy the features of a newly built home," Sheppard said in the release. "Topping it off with a visit to the Michigan Historic Site Scott Club will make for a memorable afternoon."

The Scott Club building is a Queen Anne style structure of sandstone capped by a cupola of carved oak. Two historic windows of Austrian stained glass are featured on the second floor. The recent installation of an elevator in the building has allows guests to tour the building barrier-free.

Tours of the Scott Club will run from 3:30 to 5 p.m.

The 29th annual Cottage Walk will feature tours of four unique cottages including a tour of the historic Scott Club building.

Photo provided

Tickets are $20 person. The advanced purchase of tickets is encouraged as a capacity sale is anticipated.

Tickets are on sale during normal business through June 26 at the South Haven Chamber of Commerce, 606 Phillips St. and the South Haven Visitors Bureau, 546 Phoenix St.

They will also be sold on the morning of the Cottage Walk at the Farmers Market in downtown Dyckman Park.

SHOUT for South Haven in 2025 invited the Scott Club to partner in the Cottage Walk as a means of bringing to the community's attention two active civic-minded organizations.

"Our continued partnership with the Scott Club is most fitting as both organizations strive to make a great community even greater," SHOUT President Robert Copping said in the release.

The planning committee for this year's Cottage Walk includes Copping, Carol Anderson Kunze, Anna Krajecki, Sheppard, Renee Kaplan and Tom Renner.

"Partnering with SHOUT has strengthened our fundraising and is making a positive impact in these times of rising costs," Scott Club President Carol Anderson Kunze said in the release. "Proceeds from this year's Cottage Walk will be used in support of our mission to provide arts and cultural programming in our Michigan Historic Site."

Allegan seeks resident input on waste management

By TRIBUNE STAFF

ALLEGAN — Allegan County is asking it's residents for input on how to improve how materials are managed locally.

According to a news release, all county residents are asked to share their use of existing services, identify new and improved recycling opportunities and provide feedback for the county.

Results from the survey will directly influence the county's Materials Management Plan.

"The way we manage waste not only shapes environmental outcomes but also the health of our communities," Allegan County Environmental Health Services Manager and member of the Allegan County MMP Committee Randy Rapp said in the release. "Residents have the opportunity to directly provide input on the County's programming."

The 15-question survey will focus on subjects including:

- Recycling services currently available and used
- Barriers to and frequency of recycling
- Cost of recycling services
- Support for new materials management services
- Preferred communication methods

The survey will run until June 3 and all responses are anonymous. Residents can take the survey at resourcerecycling.co1.qualtrics.com.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Ongoing events

Visually impaired and blind persons support group meeting: Every third Wednesday of the month at 1 p.m. at Senior Services of Van Buren County.

Dementia and Alzheimer's caregivers support group meeting: Every third Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m. at Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church library.

Three Blondes Brewing: Trivia night on Thursdays at 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. and Sundays at 1 p.m. and 2 p.m.

Sparkle and Spice Boutique: Mom and Me play date. Fridays from 9 to 10 a.m.

South Haven Center for the Arts: Center Studio for adults from 6-8 p.m. on the first and third Wednesday of the month. Artists of any level can bring their own projects to work on. Basic art supplies will be available. Attendees must be 18 years old and over. Members are free, non-members cost $5.

South Haven Center for the Arts: Center Studio for ages 9 to 13 from 4-5:30 p.m. every Wednesday. Young artists are invited to create art at their own pace with an instructor to help guide as needed. Free workshop but a $10 donation is suggested to help cover cost of supplies.

Candlelight Yoga: Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. at the Church of Epiphany. Cost is $15.

Food pantry: First Congregational Church open from 10 a.m. to noon on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. It is a drive-up food pantry.

Food pantry: Sacred Heart Catholic Church. For Bangor residents only. Open from 1 to 4 p.m. on Thursdays.

Food, clothing, baby pantry: Lily of the Valley Church in Covert. Open from noon to 2 p.m. on Wednesdays. Must call the central office to register.

Personal care and clothing pantry: First Assembly of God open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesdays. Must call the central office to register.

Baby pantry: Peace Lutheran Church open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. Must call the central office to register.

Baby pantry: Simpson United Methodist Church in Bangor. Open from 10 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays. Must call the central office to register.

South Haven Memorial Library: Story Time on 11 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays through May 26, 2026.

HawksHead: Pasta on the Patio every Wednesday at 5 p.m.

Michigan Maritime Museum: Hands-on the Harbor every Thursday at 10:30 a.m.

Lakeside Social Bowling Alley: Glow Bowl every Friday from noon to 9 p.m.

Bridge: Chicago Scoring at 1 p.m. on Tuesdays at the South Haven Memorial Library.

Bridge: Duplicate Scoring at 1 p.m. on Wednesdays at the South Haven Memorial Library.

First United Methodist Church: Free meals every Tuesday night. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. Meal is served at 6 p.m.

South Haven Memorial Library: Bridge Card Game from 1 to 4 p.m. every Tuesday and Wednesday. Open to the public. Beginners are welcome.

Covert Branch Library: After school art workshop for students grades 6 through 12 every Monday from 3 to 5 p.m.

Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: May 1 through 31 "Deep In the Branches" (by 2026 Bailey Fall Conference Keynote Speaker Danae Wolfe) StoryWalk

South Haven Farmers Market: Open from 8 a.m. to 2pm on Saturdays, from May to October; and on Wednesdays from June through August.

South Haven Center for the Arts: National juried exhibition with the Arts and Aging Partnership of Southwest Michigan on display from June 20 to Aug. 1.

May

30-31 – Michigan Flywheelers Museum: Kingdom of Wonders Medieval Circus performances at 3 p.m. and 6 p.m.

June

2 – Scott Club: "Questions on the Amazon" in person at Scott Club, 652 Phoenix Street, and on Zoom at 1 p.m.

4 – South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce: Tiki Luau Annual Celebration and Business Excellence Awards beginning at 5 p.m. at the South Haven Moose Lodge. Tickets cost $45 per person. RSVP required by May 22.

5 – South Haven Memorial Library: Play-Doh Play Date at 11 a.m.

5-6 – Reader's Theater: "That's Life" performance at 7 p.m. at Senior Services of Van Buren County auditorium. Tickets are available for $10 at the door.

6 – Michigan Maritime Museum: Free Fun Fest from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

7 – Reader's Theater: "That's Life" performance at 3 p.m. at Senior Services of Van Buren County auditorium. Tickets are available for $10 at the door.

8 – South Haven Garden Club: regular meeting with Plant Bingo. Social time begins at 12:30 p.m., meeting begins at 1 p.m.

9 – Rotary Club: Morning meeting. Presentation will be by Nicholas Dalton on Rural Development Enterprise as Economic/Business Development.

9-11 – Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: Bailey's Nature Buddies from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Registration is open.

10 – South Haven Memorial Library: Hooked on Yarn from 1 to 3:30 p.m.

12 – First United Methodist Church: Concert of duos featuring clarinetist Andrea Cheeseman and violinist Nancy Bargerstock at 7:30 p.m.

15-19 – Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: Bailey's Budding Naturalists week one. Online registration is open. Campers can register for one or both weeks.

16 – Scott Club: Annual Membership Meeting and Luncheon at Senior Services, 08337 M-140, South Haven. No Zoom. RSVP is required via email at info@scottclub.org.

20 – South Haven Theatre Series: "Michiganderish" written and performed by Julie Ganey at 7:30 p.m. at Listiak Auditorium. Tickets cost $15 with free admission for students.

20 – South Haven Center for the Arts: opening reception for exhibition "Care" and "Window to our World" from 2 to 4 p.m.

22 – Lake Michigan College: free screening of "Old Heart" at 6:30 p.m. hosted by the First Hebrew Congregation of South Haven, Lily of the Valley Church in Covert and Temple B'nai Shalom in St. Joseph.

22-26 – Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: Bailey's Budding Naturalists week two. Online registration is open. Campers can register for one or both weeks.

24 – South Haven Memorial Library: Hooked on Yarn from 1 to 3:30 p.m.

26 – South Haven Performance Series: The Lincoln Trio to perform at 7 p.m. at First United Methodist Church, 429 Michigan Ave. Admission is $15 and free for students.

27 – First Hebrew Congregation of South Haven: Tot Shabbat at the South Haven Memorial Library from 5 to 6 p.m..

27 – Scott Club: 29th Annual Cottage Walk from noon to 5 p.m. Tickets are $20 per person.

Subscribe to the South Haven Tribune

To start home delivery of the South Haven Tribune, 269-429-1396. To report missed deliveries, wet or damaged papers, call the circulation department before 3:30 p.m. at 269-429-1396.

Avoid foam on Michigan's waters this summer, health experts warn

By MAX REINHART
The Detroit News (TNS)

Michigan's numerous waterways offer plenty of opportunities for outdoor recreation, but as summer draws near, state health experts warned that even touching the foam that sometimes accumulates on those waterways could lead to health problems.

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services said in a statement that anyone who comes in contact with foam should rinse off as soon as possible to avoid inadvertently ingesting the "forever chemicals" that can build up in the substance.

Foam can form on lakes, rivers, streams and other surface waters and is notorious for containing high levels of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), which are linked to harmful health effects.

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services' announcement last week came days after the Trump administration announced plans to roll back federal standards for certain PFAS, raising concerns among Michigan residents whose drinking water has been contaminated by the pollutants.

PFAS can enter public waterways when products, industrial waste or firefighting foam containing them are released into the environment and then carried by runoff, groundwater or wastewater discharge into rivers and lakes.

Levels are particularly high in the foam sometimes found atop Michigan's surface waters. The state health department said the foam can be white, off-white or brown in color. It may have an earthy or fishy scent and tends to accumulate in bays, eddies, dams and other river barriers.

State officials have long advised people to avoid swallowing foam or letting their pets swallow it for fear of contamination.

As summer approaches, the state is telling Michigan residents and visitors to rinse off or bathe as soon as possible after touching any foam.

"The risk of PFAS exposure through your skin is low. However, you can accidentally swallow PFAS, as well as bacteria, algae, viruses and other chemicals, if you do not rinse off or bathe after touching foam," Natasha Bagdasarian, Michigan's chief medical executive, said in a statement. "Rinsing off or bathing after water activities will help protect you, your family and your pets from harmful substances that may be in foam or water."

Pet owners should also be vigilant, as animals can ingest foam residue that has built up in their fur when they groom themselves. MDDHS recommends rinsing pets and bathing them with fresh water if they come in contact with foam.

Levels of PFAS above 70 parts per trillion are considered unsafe for human consumption. They are among a group of chemicals used worldwide during the past century in manufacturing, firefighting and common household items as well as other consumer products.

Michigan has nearly 400 sites with known or suspected PFAS pollution, according to a state database. Locations include military facilities, dumps and chemical manufacturers, among other sites.

The chemicals contain extremely stable bonds that resist the natural breakdown process, giving rise to their "forever chemical" moniker. They have been linked to serious health issues, including high cholesterol and liver damage. Some pose risks of cancer or reduced immune system functioning.

On May 18, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced plans to rescind and delay federal standards for some PFAS. The standards were challenged by the chemical industry, which sued after the rules were enacted in 2024.

In announcing the rollbacks, EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin said the Biden administration failed to follow Safe Drinking Water Act requirements when creating the regulations.

The Republican administration's proposal was met with pushback by some lawmakers, including Michigan's U.S. Rep. Debbie Dingell, D-Mich., and U.S. Sen. Elissa Slotkin, D-Mich., who fear the changes will affect cleanup projects at Camp Grayling and the former Wurtsmith Air Force Base, where military activities released PFAS compounds that have moved into waterways and residents' drinking water wells.

www.southhaventribune.net

An American Quilt of Song
Adam Wurst, *Artistic Director* • Caitlin Cusack, *Pianist*
Saturday, May 30, 2026 • 7:00 pm
Sunday, May 31, 2026 • 4:00 pm
Fennville High School Sheehan Auditorium
4 S. Memorial Drive, Fennville
250 YEARS
TICKETS
$20 Adults • $10 Students
lakeshorecommunitychorus.ludus.com
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FOCUS

The high price of long COVID

Long COVID will cost the U.S. an estimated $8 billion over just 3 years due to healthcare burden, managing symptoms and loss to the workforce

By BRUCE Y. LEE
Professor of Health Policy and Management, City University of New York,
and HANNAH DIMMICK
Postdoctoral Researcher in Public Health, CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Public Policy
(The Conversation)

THE CONVERSATION

There is currently no clear national strategy on how to manage long COVID going forward or COVID-19 in general, for that matter. Recommendations on face mask use, indoor air quality measures and who should get vaccinated each year have been ambiguous and changing often since 2021. Such recommendations and regulations have also varied significantly from organization to organization and state to state.

Headlines on long COVID have become much more rare than during the first few years of the COVID-19 pandemic.

But that doesn't mean the more than 44 million Americans who have at some point reported long COVID symptoms – a number that continues to grow – are no longer suffering, or that the U.S. isn't paying for it.

Long COVID refers to a condition where at least one of the COVID-19 symptoms, such as fatigue, shortness of breath, and headaches, persists for more than three months.

We are artificial intelligence and computational modeling researchers who have been developing and using these methods to aid communications and decision-making in public health. For this study, we worked in a collaborative team of public health and infectious disease experts.

Our team's study, which was published in 2025 in the Journal of Infectious Diseases, estimated that the total economic burden of long COVID will likely exceed US$8 billion between 2025 and the end of 2027.

This study entailed developing and running a computational simulation model that represented what might happen to each person after suffering COVID-19, including the risk of that person developing different types of long COVID and the resulting symptoms, healthcare costs and lost-work productivity.

Based on our simulations, a single case of long COVID could cost the U.S. an average of between $9,906 and $11,646 annually, with more severe cases costing even more. Productivity losses would account for well over 90 percent of these costs, which means that employers around the country will be affected.

More questions than answers

Studies have suggested that somewhere between 6 percent and 20 percent of people with COVID-19 will go on to develop long COVID. We then used numbers within this range in our model to then calculate the number of people who have developed long COVID, and therefore had probabilities of suffering different symptoms and accompanying healthcare costs and productivity losses.

Taking the most conservative 6 percent end of that range and assuming that long COVID symptoms would only last for one year results in an annual cost of $2.01 billion. Increasing this percentage to 10 percent would push the estimated annual burden to $3.4 billion.

Naturally, the longer that symptoms persist, the higher the total cost. The previously mentioned $8 billion burden for 2025-2027 assumed the 6 percent incidence of long COVID with symptoms lasting up to three years. This is likely still a conservative estimate, since many who developed long COVID five to six years ago have continued to have symptoms with no clear end in sight. In addition, evidence suggests that long COVID is underdiagnosed and underreported.

Currently, there are no effective cures for long COVID, and treatment entails trying to manage the symptoms as best as possible. It's also not clear whether and when long COVID symptoms might ever subside.

There is also a severe shortage of long COVID treatment clinics, with far too few to meet the demand for specialized treatment.

Higher demands and few resources

Despite the lack of preventive options and the need for more answers, the U.S. is moving further away from being able to effectively manage long COVID.

For example, in the midst of the massive funding cuts in President Donald Trump's second term, in 2025 the Department of Health and Human Services shuttered the Office of Long COVID Research after only two years of existence. The same year, the National Institutes of Health terminated various funding initiatives for studying potential pathways to and treatments for long COVID.

There is currently no clear national strategy on how to manage long COVID going forward or COVID-19 in general, for that matter. Recommendations on face mask use, indoor air quality measures and who should get vaccinated each year have been ambiguous and changing often since 2021. Such recommendations and regulations have also varied significantly from organization to organization and state to state.

Without any changes, the number of people with long COVID is almost certain to grow, and those with persistent long COVID symptoms could continue to suffer and cost society.

Our study shows literally billions of reasons why all of this is a big problem.

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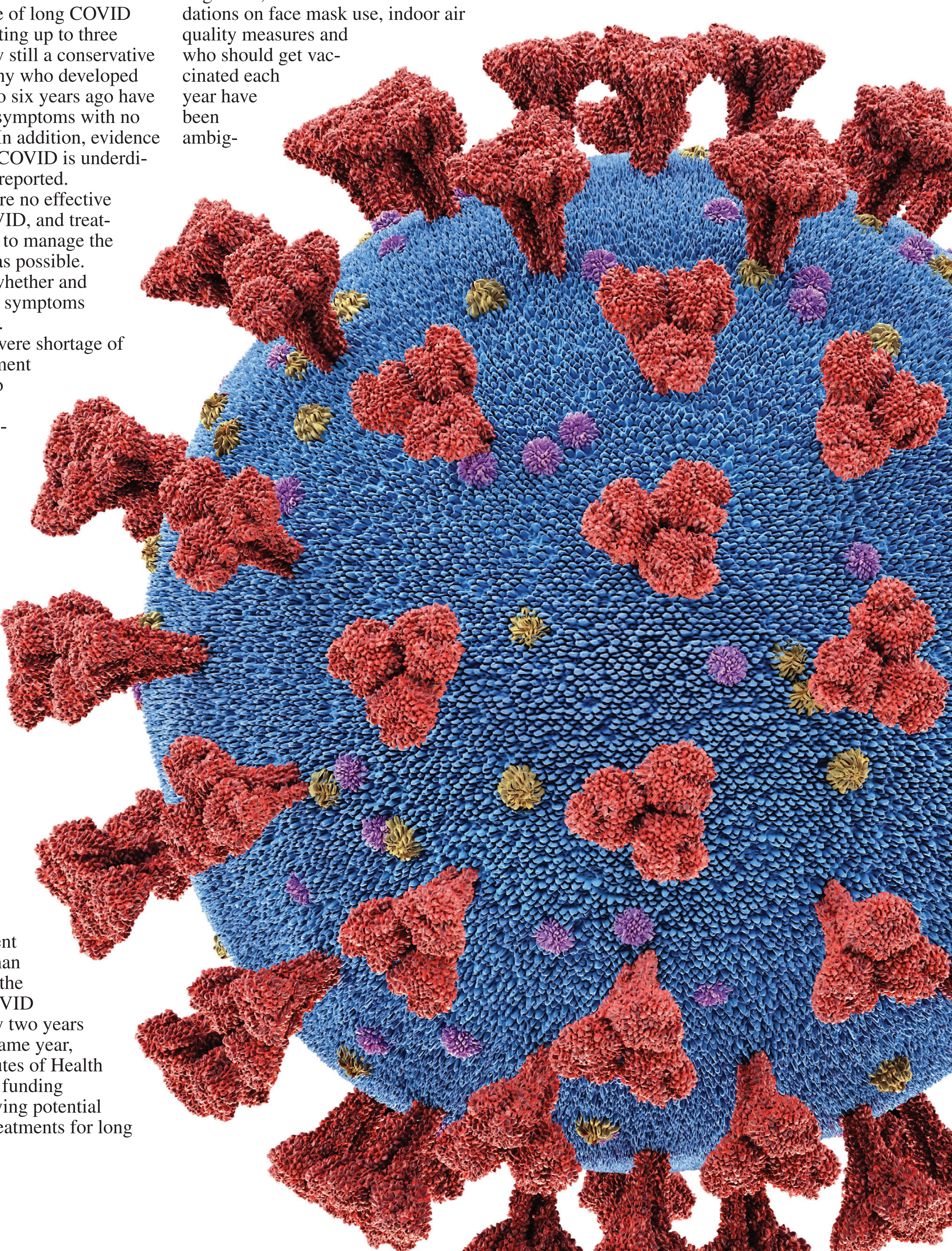


FOCUS

‘Dun-dun … dun-dun’

The great white shark surge of 2026 and why it’s good for SoCal

By CLARA HARTER
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

LOS ANGELES — As the early morning breeze tickles the top of the Santa Monica Bay, three scientists pack into a small whaler boat and push out to sea in pursuit of great white sharks.

Armed with a set of drones, a GoPro camera on a stick and a tracking device atop a spear, the team from the Cal State Long Beach Shark Lab has many questions they are seeking to answer about this sharp-toothed species.

What is driving the ongoing shark surge in Southern California? Which beaches do the predators frequent? And, perhaps most important, why do they, on rare occasion, attack people?

While the drone flies above, one of the researchers crouches underneath a blanket shielding the video feed from the sun and scours the screen for a dark black flash amid a sea of blue.

The team sits and waits, patiently bobbing until … “Shark!” the spotter yells.

And the boat sets off in pursuit.

Once the fish is located, a flash of the GoPro underneath the animal’s belly helps the crew determine its gender, while a stab of the spear below the dorsal fin implants a tracker.

Using this method, the Shark Lab has successfully tagged 390 sharks since 2010, of which about 233 remain active in their tracking system. They use this data to study the giant fish’s movements and behaviors, with a goal of gleaning insights that can improve ocean safety.

As juvenile great white sightings are on the rise in Southern California, that mission is perhaps more important than ever.

An “aggressive” 10-foot shark prompted the cancellation of a surf competition in Huntington Beach in April. Fishermen are now hooking juvenile great whites off the Hermosa Pier. And a Santa Barbara foil surfer was recently chased out of the ocean by a fast-moving dorsal fin.

Shark Lab Director Chris Lowe says this uptick is driven by toasty ocean temperatures during an unseasonably warm spring. The ocean off California is currently experiencing an extreme marine heat wave driven by a persistent high-pressure system and low winds – and likely exacerbated by climate change.

With an upcoming super El Niño cycle predicted to continue heating the sea, Lowe predicts a “very sharky summer” ahead.

That phrase might raise the hairs on the back of your neck, evoking the eerie “dun-dun, dun-dun, dun-dun” of Steven Spielberg’s 1975 classic, “Jaws.”

But Lowe and his team of researchers have a welcome piece of news. When it comes to the sharks that frequent Southern California’s coastline, humans are not on the menu.

In the last 20 years, there has been a steady increase in juvenile great whites observed in California, where they congregate along certain beaches, feeding on stingrays and smaller fish. Researchers believe this population growth is aided by waterswarmingfrom climate change and expanded protections for great whites, which became illegal to fish in California in 1994.

At the same time, there are more people than ever surfing, swimming, kayaking and otherwise recreating in the ocean – largely blissfully unaware that sharks may be nearby. When Shark Lab researchers used drones to study two shark congregation sites in southern Santa Barbara County and central San Diego County, they found humans and sharks swimming together 97 percent of the time.

But although the number of both sharks and humans in the water is up, there has not been a corresponding uptick in negative encounters.

Since 1950, California has recorded 235 shark incidents, of which 97 resulted in no injury, 121 resulted in a nonlethal injury and 17 were fatal, according to the Department of Fish and Wildlife. During this span, there was a single death reported in L.A. County – a kayaker who was attacked by a great white shark off Malibu in 1989.

“It’s very, very rare that people come into contact with them and even more rare that there’s actually a bite or an incident of any kind,” said James Anderson, a postdoctoral fellow at the Shark Lab. “I always tell people that if you’re going to go to the beach, your biggest risk is probably the 405.”

Research from an ongoing study at the lab indicates that sharks have learned to recognize the unique sounds humans make in the ocean. This may help explain why attacks on humans have not increased in proportion to shark population growth.

“We think that they can actually identify people,” Lowe said. “We exhibit different sounds, and probably different smells, and we don’t pose a threat, and they don’t consider us food, so as a result, they just ignore us.”

Though negative encounters are rare, they do still happen.

In September, a 3- to 4-foot-long shark “nipped” at a man attempting to swim from Catalina to San Pedro. In December, a swimmer was killed in a great white shark attack off Lovers Point in Monterey. And in March, a surfer was seriously injured by a shark off the Mendocino coast.

When attacks occur, Lowe said, it’s often a case of a shark mistakenly identifying humans as prey or acting defensively when confronted. For example, in 2014, a juvenile great white shark bit a swimmer near the Manhattan Beach Pier after it had been thrashing about for 40 minutes in an attempt to free itself from a fisherman’s line.

Although Lowe is, overall, not greatly concerned about the risk of unprovoked shark attacks in Southern California this summer, he is nervous about the recent trend of local anglers attempting to hook great whites off piers – as this raises the risk of agitated sharks biting at swimmers.

He also noted that, during the last strong El Niño cycle in 2015, extra-warm waters led to other species of sharks traveling north such as hammerheads, which were responsible for two shark bites that year.

But overall, researchers believe that a sharky summer is a positive sign because it indicates that Southern California’s coastline – which not too long ago was ravaged by DDT pollution – is now healthy enough to feed an apex predator.

Prior to the 21st century, sharks were a rare sight in California waters, but beginning about 20 years ago, their numbers have been steadily increasing, Lowe said. In 1994, California banned the fishing of great white sharks and the use of gill nets, which indiscriminately entangle any animal that swims into them, within three miles of the coast, helping the population rebound over time.

Meanwhile, California’s ocean has been gradually heating up, contributing to an uptick in juvenile great white sharks traveling to California from Baja in late spring and summer, before heading back down south in winter.

This year, the Shark Lab saw juveniles arriving from Baja as early as February, compared with their more typical late April, early May arrival.

Lowe seeks to continue monitoring local shark populations going forward but noted that securing funding is a challenge. With a private grant running out in September, he is appealing to legislators to restore state funding and seeking private backing to keep research going in the meantime.

Researchers have learned that the juveniles, which can range from 4 to 9 feet long, gather at certain Southern California beaches, enjoying the warmer shallow waters, the protection from larger predatory sharks and a veritable feast of ocean pancakes, aka stingrays. Over the years, these hot spots have included Will Rogers State Beach, Carpinteria, Del Mar and Huntington Beach.

Researchers have also seen mature great whites, measuring up to 15 feet long, at a greater frequency in the last decade. Those tend to swim farther out to sea and can often be found near Catalina or the other Channel Islands.

Although great whites have a fearsome reputation, they act as guardians of the ocean and are essential to maintaining the delicate balance of a marine ecosystem.

Similar to the role that wolves play in promoting biodiversity, great white sharks are also apex predators that keep mid-level predator populations in check, preventing the overconsumption of resources lower on the food chain. Studies have found that reintroducing sharks to an ecosystem has enabled the recovery of seagrass meadows and coral reefs.

“In the U.S., we have worked really hard to bring sharks back, and we are stoked to see that,” Lowe said. “But the public isn’t used to seeing them. That’s why we spend a lot of our energy taking our science and bringing it to the public – so people can actually feel safe.”

seamartini / Getty Images

FOCUS

Photos by John J. Kim / Chicago Tribune

Melissa Clark, left, and fellow wine enthusiasts write postcards to members of Congress during a postcard-writing campaign to protest current presidential policies and executive orders, at Deep Red Wine Merchant, 2901 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, on May 12.

Chicago restaurants and bars become spaces for political protesting

'Everyone's experiencing some level of rage'

By ZAREEN SYED
Chicago Tribune (TNS)

CHICAGO — With a glass of white wine in one hand and a printed spreadsheet of names and addresses of around 50 lawmakers in the other, Allyssa Bujdoso was setting up for a crowd at Deep Red Wine Merchant in Avondale. A guy with a sign reading "(Expletive) Trump" rushed through the door, handed over a sheet of stamps and then hurried away.

"Oh wow, I actually saw him walking around this area yesterday and gave him one of our flyers to come and hang out with us," Bujdoso said last Tuesday evening, peering over to see the unnamed activist scurry across the street. "This is what it feels like when we're creating a community space … even though he didn't stay!"

A glass of wine is sipped during a postcard-writing campaign to members of Congress to protest current presidential policies and executive orders, at Deep Red Wine Merchant, 2901 N. Milwaukee Ave., on May 12 in Chicago.

The stamps are for the stacks of postcards on the table in the middle of the bar that are central to the Chicago Postcard Protest series. The cards have a photo of President Donald Trump screaming into a mic, with three bold, uppercase words to the right: Unfit, unwell, unhinged. "The constitution says you can, the people say you can remove him," printed on the bottom, as a nod to section four of the 25th Amendment.

Next to a pile of pens, there are multiple copies of a "shame list" Bujdoso created. The list, which Bujdoso compiles with blurbs about why various United States senators and congresspeople are problematic, makes it easier for attendees to "direct their rage" to the appropriate places, she said.

Bujdoso, an employee at a global content production company, started the project in April following her involvement in "whistle-mania" events to distribute warning kits for residents wary of Immigration Customs Enforcement. The event at Deep Red Wine Merchant was the organization's third, with many more to come.

After Operation Midway Blitz last fall, Chicago's local hospitality scene has become a central front in resistance against ramped-up federal immigration enforcement, combining community-driven economic support with food and shared meals or beverages.

The Chicago Postcard Protest is intended to offer residents another way to denounce the myriad social justice issues plaguing communities in Chicago and elsewhere. It's especially appealing to folks who can't physically protest in the streets but want to use their time and voice for the same causes, Bujdoso explained.

"Postcards physically take up space," she said. "Sure, phone calls are great, a bit pesky for whoever has to write down everything in your message, but if you flood their desk with a ton of mail, that's an even bigger inconvenience and that's what we want."

Bujdoso provides a sample prompt, but she prefers when attendees write from the heart, releasing built-up grievances against those currently in positions of power.

"Lindsey Graham gets a lot of postcards," laughed Bujdoso, about the Republican senator from South Carolina who is a staunch defender of federal immigration agents. He was aggressively underlined on many of the attendees' contact sheets.

Most of the postcards sent out last Tuesday dealt with matters of immigration enforcement, voter rights and a push in southern states to redraw electoral maps that would dilute the voting power of Black and brown voters.

Erin Bjorkquist from Logan Square said that "if those (senators and congresspeople) keep getting elected, that's only going to keep us in this situation longer." Bjorkquist, a "middle of the road" protester, brought her friend Julie Cwik to Deep Red Wine Merchant for an accessible way to support both a cause and a bottle shop.

Though visible immigration confrontations have faded since the height of the Trump administration's Operation Midway Blitz last fall, Immigration and Customs Enforcement has taken on a "quieter" approach, focusing on street-level arrests, residential stops and targeting individuals at courthouses.

Bujdoso said the activist community and groups in Chicago's hospitality industry are shifting their gears too, finding new outlets for resistance.

"The best thing we can do is be creative about how we're pushing back against ICE and against the government," she said. "If they're going to try and surprise us, we're going to try and surprise them … stir up some 'good trouble.'"

Belmont Tavern owner Nick Kokonas, one of the four lead organizers of the Chicago Postcard Protest, along with Avondale Bowl co-owner Jeff Wilson and Deep Red Wine Merchant owner Dave Thompson, was thrilled to see the postcard stack getting shorter and shorter as people filled them out.

"There's this idea that if you don't like what's going on, you can just call or email your representatives, but most people don't do that. … You can send out an email that just goes to some sort of spam folder," Kokonas said. "But with this initiative, it's a very cathartic way to release how we feel and demand change, and to know that these postcards will land across some desk and people will see it."

Melissa Clark, a Logan Square resident originally from Minnesota, took a deep sigh before putting pen to paper. Two places she calls home have been faced with unthinkable violence, she said.

"It's one of those things that when you're feeling helpless in a situation, this is a very, very simple thing that I can do instead of sitting at home spiraling or whatever," Clark said. "It's a good way to fill the time – everyone's experiencing some level of rage right now."

Within an hour, the space was filled with people scribbling down grievances over a glass of wine.

A week before the Chicago Postcard Protest event, another gathering in nearby Logan Square struck the same intentions. But the focus was a family-style dinner at an Anti-ICE Supper Club.

"It's comforting to walk into a space where you know we're all in agreement," said Stacy Simpson, an Evanston resident seated at the supper club at LouLou by Lula Cafe, as she pierced her fork into a pile of butter-poached romaine and salmon. "Because even with our families now, we don't know where everybody stands and it can be very contentious."

Simpson and her husband were among the 52 diners at the dimly lit Lula Cafe spinoff space. The supper club, ticketed at $150 a person, was raising funds for the Illinois Coalition of Immigrant and Refugee Rights.

Many of the diners said they've been seeking out businesses and restaurants that align with their moral stance on things like immigration or war. Even a simple solidarity sign sometimes helps narrow down where to spend money, noted Lakeview resident Carol Fox.

"We all have to do something, and this is my little bit of something right now," she said.

The supper club was presented by the food and travel media company Roads and Kingdoms, which hosted a Chicago run May 4-7 after a successful stint in the Florida Keys. The series is a small, but vital contribution to the fight for an America under attack, said Nathan Thornburgh, Anti-ICE Supper Club co-founder and Roads and Kingdoms partner.

"If you care at all about food, you have to care about the people who provide and produce it," Thornburgh said.

It was the 12th Anti-ICE Supper Club event since federal immigration agents tore through immigrant communities nationwide. The concept itself, however, is in its second iteration.

In 2017, Roads & Kingdoms and the late Anthony Bourdain launched the "Banned Countries Dinner Series" in response to the first Trump administration's travel bans. The dinners were specific to each individual culture in each country on the banned lists, including Yemeni and Sudanese chefs.

Now, the dinner is focused on the second Trump administration's ongoing immigration enforcement tactics.

"We chose an aggressive name on purpose. We want to come out and find that there are entire restaurants, entire communities, entire groups of diners and workers who will stand together for a dinner that's called 'Anti-ICE,'" Thornburgh said. "That's beautiful proof of the ongoing strength of our First Amendment rights."

Thornburgh said he's always believed that food is the best way to get people to care about a particular issue – a way inside conversations that unveil what's wrong with societies near and far. He said his old friend, Bourdain, felt the same.

"I miss him terribly and I miss his ability to be very succinct and unerring in the moral clarity of what needs to be said," Thornburgh said. "We don't know what he would say now, but we did know one thing – he really did not like Trump."

Diners at LouLou by Lula Cafe raised their glasses to Bourdain and to ICIRR, an organization at the forefront of helping families in the Chicago area navigate the legal system after an ICE encounter.

Alex Miller, development manager for ICIRR, said all the money raised at the dinner went toward ICIRR's deportation defense work and rapid response programs. And a lot of that work begins with the family support hotline, which received over 27,000 calls between last September and now.

"We've been doing this work for many years, but it has obviously become much more necessary with an incredible influx of calls and need for our work," he said. "Last year was incredibly bad, and luckily, (ICE) kind of pulled back at the moment, but we're not resting on our laurels. We are building up the fences, we still have a number of hotline operators employed, and we have trained over 25,000 people in this work to respond."

Jason Hammel, chef and owner of the popular farm-to-table Lula Cafe, which won the 2024 James Beard Award for Outstanding Hospitality, said the supper club was a perfect fit for them.

"We're concerned about supporting the people who have been impacted by (immigration enforcement) and this is one way that we can do that, through food and cooking for people who feel the same," Hammel said. "The meal is designed to bring people together in a common call for a common cause – a shared value."

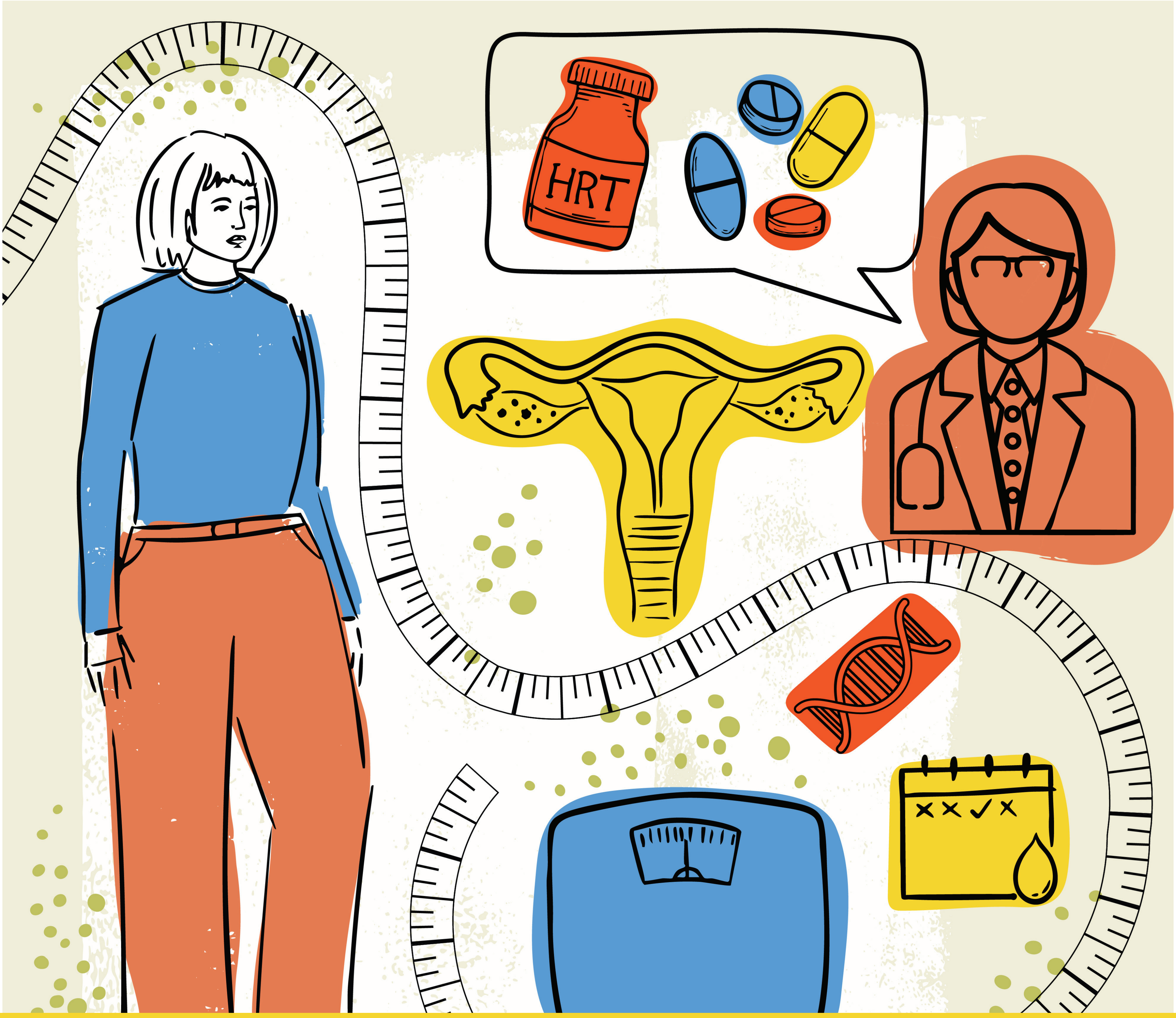
Ann Torralba was seated at a six-person table at the Anti-ICE Supper Club alongside her husband, Patrick Milani, with a front row seat to the open-concept kitchen where Hammel was piling canoe-harvested wild rice and ramps onto plates.

Torralba, who is Filipino, said she's deeply invested in the experiences of her fellow immigrants and jumped at the opportunity to support ICIRR and LouLou/Lula Cafe, which have been vocal supporters of minority groups in Chicago.

The couple lives in the Hispanic-heavy Hermosa neighborhood and has seen the impact that immigration fears have had on their neighbors, beyond just the blow to businesses and foot traffic in the area.

"It's sad because there is a disconnect that people don't understand – diversity makes cities what they are, the cultural contributions (of immigrants) are significant," Torralba said. "They've had to be careful… hide, these are our friends, wonderful people in our community just trying to survive and have better lives for their children. They're not the enemy, they're not the criminals."

FOCUS



diane555 / Getty Images

Shifting attitudes on menopause *drive lawmakers to push for* new protections

By KELCIE MOSELEY-MORRIS
Stateline.org (TNS)

Stigma is fading and new laws are passing that will help increase access to menopause treatment.

When Jacqueline Perez started experiencing symptoms of menopause in her early 50s, the brain fog was so severe, she thought she had early onset dementia.

Perez, who founded a website dedicated to normalizing aging for women, said she gained more than 30 pounds and struggled with depression for months before she found a health provider who tested her hormone levels and recommended hormone replacement therapy for low estrogen.

That was nearly a decade ago, and in the years since, Perez said the culture around menopause treatment has changed dramatically.

"We still have a long way to go, in my opinion, but I think at least we're on the path," she said.

Menopause refers to the time when a woman stops having menstrual periods, which typically occurs between the ages of 45 and 55, according to the National Institute on Aging. The associated changes in hormones can cause hot flashes, night sweats, joint problems, bone density loss, insomnia, mood changes and more.

Lawmakers and advocates alike told Stateline the topic of menopause used to be taboo, but there has been a generational shift in recent years that has led to more legislation in statehouses around the country, providing more access to treatments and preventive care as well as more educational opportunities for healthcare providers.

Claire Gill, founder and president of the National Menopause Foundation, started the nonprofit in 2019 and said over the course of the past seven years, public awareness of the issue and interest from clinicians has noticeably increased.

And in November, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration removed its most severe "black box" warning from hormone replacement therapy for menopause and perimenopause after new research that the presumed risks of cancer, stroke and dementia from its use, once thought to be high, came from a flawed study. In the months since, the demand for the therapy has led to a nationwide shortage of certain products such as the estrogen patch.

Gill said more than 60 pieces of legislation related to menopause have been introduced nationwide this year, and 26 states have enacted a menopause-related law since 2019. There tend to be four categories of the legislation: mandating insurance coverage for treatments, workplace accommodations, awareness campaigns and healthcare provider education.

Rhode Island House of Representatives / TNS

Rhode Island Democratic Sen. Lori Urso sponsored the first bill of its kind adding workplace accommodations for menopause- and perimenopause-related conditions to state law in 2025. A generational shift in recent years has led to more legislation in statehouses around the country.

The subject is bipartisan: Lawmakers in liberal-leaning Illinois, Oregon and Washington have approved bills requiring insurance coverage, but so has conservative Louisiana.

Gill said the insurance conversation is especially significant, because bone density tests are only covered in existing laws when a person reaches the age of 65 and is eligible for Medicare. But women lose up to 20 percent of bone density in the first five years after menopause, which happens at an average age of 52. That's a big gap that puts a woman at increased risk for fractures.

"I'm excited that we're taking time and focusing more on the role that estrogen plays from head to toe in women, and not just looking at it as, 'Oh, women get hot flashes,'" Gill said. "It's so much more than that, and we can do more to protect our hearts and our brains and all of our organs – and prevent hot flashes."

Getting providers to listen

In June 2025, Democratic state Sen. Lori Urso sponsored a bill that made Rhode Island the first state to require workplace accommodations, such as a modified work schedule, for menopause and its related conditions. It was added to the same part of employment law about women who are pregnant or nursing.

Urso said she had a challenging time personally with menopause, and she wasn't sure she was going to be able to continue functioning at the necessary level to keep doing her job. When she introduced her bill in committee last year and detailed why symptoms could make it difficult to work, several of the men who were present at the hearing followed her out of the room, stunned by what they'd heard.

"They said, 'Oh my god, I had no idea about any of this,'" Urso said.

In the year since, Urso has watched a flurry of bills spread to other states. Many of them, including another bill from Urso that's under consideration this year, would mandate insurance coverage for treatments related to menopause and perimenopause, the years leading up to menopause when some symptoms can start.

Others are proposing bills similar to Urso's workplace accommodations law, with the aim of instituting more education requirements for doctors, directing health departments to conduct a public awareness campaign, or telling agencies to study the issue and make recommendations.

"I don't think I invented something, I think I just made it OK, and helped open up a necessary dialogue out there," Urso said.

Urso's bill to mandate insurance coverage is still pending in the Rhode Island Legislature, but others have already made it law, including in New Jersey.

A new generation

Democratic Assemblywoman Heather Simmons said she was looking at legislation in other statehouses around the country and found the insurance mandates to be inconsistent. She decided to draft a version for New Jersey that she wanted to be the most comprehensive bill in the country, covering hormonal, non-hormonal and preventive treatments for perimenopause and menopause on state-regulated insurance plans.

It was signed into law in January, passing alongside another bill that allows healthcare providers to earn continuing education credits for menopause-related topics.

Although Simmons said her healthcare providers are generally very good and her insurance is excellent, she faced an uphill battle when going through menopause. She said she would ask about symptoms and whether they could be related to menopause, and her providers would shrug their shoulders. Not for a lack of caring, she said, but lack of knowledge.

"I'm just so grateful that my generation and the generations that follow me are saying no, we deserve better than that, we can do better than that," Simmons said. "We're not afraid to talk about it anymore."

Simmons' bill also includes behavioral health services for those diagnosed with depression or other conditions, and counseling for those who don't have a formal diagnosis. It also covers pelvic floor therapy, and bone health screenings and treatments.

Her next step, she said, is to make sure that insurance carriers can't deny testosterone prescriptions for women who need it just because it's an off-label use.

SHUSTERMAN

Testosterone was a hormone replacement therapy that Pennsylvania Democratic state Rep. Melissa Shusterman needed to help her feel like herself again.

Shusterman has introduced four bills this session related to perimenopause and menopause, including insurance coverage for preventive care for hip fractures and a joint government study to review workplace policies for state employees. Four other related bills are pending from other representatives, including one that would mandate Medicaid coverage for menopause treatments.

"All of this is going to help women in the long run, which means mothers are happier, women are happier and partners are happier, and that makes us healthier as a society," Shusterman said.

Advocates like Gill, who is also CEO of the Bone Health & Osteoporosis Foundation, say their goal is to stay committed to pushing the boulder up the hill when it comes to passing more laws and creating more awareness of this phase of life. Too many women still think they have dementia or cancer before they realize it might be perimenopause, she said.

Gill noted the entire budget for women's health research under the National Institutes of Health has long been about 10 percent of its total budget – that includes juvenile and post-menopausal ages. The gap in health research was already wide, she said, and amid cuts to federal agencies and projects under President Donald Trump's administration, a recent report from the Washington Post showed a 31 percent decrease in projects funded in 2025 that contained the word "women."

"There's always been a need to increase that (budget) … and now we're cutting the dollars," Gill said.

"The important thing is that there are both immediate and long-term things that can be done at the local, state and federal level that can bring about not just better quality of life and symptom treatment for women, but also longer-term health benefits for women," she said.

Stateline is part of States Newsroom, a national nonprofit news organization focused on state policy. Visit at stateline.org.

HEALTH

'A nightmare to think about'

Driving behavior may be early warning sign of dementia

By CINDY KRISCHER GOODMAN
South Florida Sun Sentinel (TNS)

Dreamstime / TNS

New evidence in a study by researchers at Florida Atlantic University and the University of Central Florida found that changes in driving behavior can act as biomarkers indicating a decline in mental clarity that pre-dates major signs of dementia.

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — When the red light turned green, Christine Burger found herself unsure what to do next.

Burger, 73, had driven the streets of Delray Beach for many years, and had traveled often through the intersection where she was now stopped. Yet she was unsure which direction to take.

It wasn't the first time.

"There are times when I'm with my husband, and I'm driving, and I'll stop in an intersection, and I think, well, which way am I supposed to go?" Burger admitted. "I think to myself, well, I know either way I'm going to get where I have to go, but why don't I know where I'm going when I have gone that same route the whole time I lived in South Florida … and it's very frustrating."

The personal and family struggle over when to stop driving is increasingly common in Florida amid the highest number of senior drivers ever recorded in the United States. A decision to take away car keys or give them up often comes after an accident or driving scare – typically when Alzheimer's disease is further advanced. Yet more subtle changes in how people drive may be early warning signs not to be ignored.

New evidence in a study by researchers at Florida Atlantic University and the University of Central Florida found that changes in driving behavior can act as biomarkers indicating a decline in mental clarity that pre-dates major signs of dementia.

The three-year FAU/UCF study of 450 seniors in South and Central Florida found that drivers with mild cognitive decline exhibited less control of the gas pedal, took shorter or more fragmented trips, engaged in frequent hard braking, and drove lower average speeds. Overall, drivers with mild cognitive decline were less confident and less responsive on the road than those without it.

"Everyday driving habits – captured passively through in-car sensors – may offer a powerful new way to detect subtle cognitive changes long before they become obvious," said Ruth Tappen, senior author and professor in FAU's Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing and a member of FAU's Stiles-Nicholson Brain Institute.

Tappen and her team of researchers studied driver behavior in real-life traffic conditions using the in-vehicle sensors: one for telematics data and one for video. Participants also underwent regular tests of thinking and memory skills.

Researchers found that it was the combination of behaviors – not any single action – that most effectively distinguished those with impairment from those without. In the past, studies have mostly used driving simulations and questionnaires.

"This is a suggestion that you be more aware of what's happening to you cognitively, and if you become more aware of changes, get tested," Tappen said. "We're not doing this to get people off the road. We're in the business of letting people know what may be happening with them."

Tappan said seniors with some early mental decline may self-regulate, possibly unconsciously. They may exercise greater caution while driving – remaining in the slower lanes and staying in familiar neighborhoods.

"These attempts to compensate for accumulating deficits eventually become insufficient to allow the individual to continue to drive safely," Tappen's research found. Studies have shown that individuals with Alzheimer's are at an increased risk of at-fault crashes, according to the Alzheimer's Foundation.

Study participants weigh in

Lorraine Marchand, 80, of Sunrise, participated in the FAU study.

"Everybody my age is interested in cognitive decline. We all watch ourselves to see what we're doing. Are we forgetting things? It's just very common to be concerned," she told the South Florida Sun Sentinel. "I think that driving is complex and people with really serious problems know it, but people who don't have a really serious decline, they don't really know how it affects their driving."

Marchand said she has noticed behavior changes in friends who seem unaware. "They don't get lost and anything obvious like that, but they're more cautious in their driving," she said. "They stick to the right-hand lane all the time and go really slow."

She understands, though, that losing access to a vehicle in car-dependent Florida poses huge challenges.

"It's like a nightmare to think about not being able to drive here in Florida," Marchand said. "How do you get around? What do you do? How do you function? I can't walk to Publix, and I can't certainly can't carry my groceries back."

Family members often share how challenging it is to tell their loved ones to stop driving. Some seniors become angry and refuse.

Priscilla Jean-Louis of Tallahassee says her mother, Vera Johnson, drove until she was 70, even though she should have given up her keys a year or two earlier. By the time Jean-Louis disconnected her mother's car battery to derail her, she was driving in the wrong direction, stopping at green lights and running red lights. "My daughters were scared to ride with Granny," she said. "It prompted me to pay attention."

Taking away a family member's keys is emotional, said Jennifer Braisted, the Alzheimer's Association of America's territory advocacy director for the Southeast Region.

"If you notice something is different when driving with mom and dad or a spouse, have those conversations and get a plan in place," she said. "I have seen many instances where the family wished they had done something sooner."

Giving up driving is not a given

While over time, dementia affects the skills needed for safe driving, not everyone with a diagnosis needs to give up driving. One in three people diagnosed with dementia still drives, particularly with new medications and treatments that are preventing the disease from advancing.

About 1 in 9 people age 65 and older, or about 11 percent, are diagnosed with Alzheimer's dementia. About 35.8 percent of people over 85 have Alzheimer's.

Burger said she has a diagnosis and takes medication. So for now, she continues to drive.

"I am fortunate," she said. "I'm still aware of stop signs and red lights. I'm still aware of a lot, and that's only because I went to a neurologist. I was tested, and I am on medication, and I'm starting cognitive therapy to keep this at bay so that I can drive as long as possible."

She plans to monitor her own driving habits.

"The minute the neurosurgeon surgeon or any doctor involved in my treatment says 'you can no longer drive,' I will not drive," she said. "And we are planning because that might happen."

Tappen said the study is ongoing and the video data still needs to be analyzed. However, she said research indicates that seniors should use their cars, equipped with many sensors, to monitor their driving.

"Our cars talk to us these days, so pay attention," she said. "The car can provide you with some feedback and let you know that you might want to be more aware and have an evaluation done."

ASK THE PEDIATRICIAN

WATER PARK SAFETY

ABOVE: There are 1,300 water parks in the United States and 85 million people visit them each year. As a parent, it's important to know what to look for if you are planning a trip to an indoor or outdoor water park.

Olesia Bilkei / Dreamstime / TNS

By ANDREW BERNSTEIN, M.D., FAAP
American Academy of Pediatrics (TNS)

There are 1,300 water parks in the United States and 85 million people visit them each year. As a parent, it's important to know what to look for if you are planning a trip to an indoor or outdoor water park.

First and foremost, know the rules of the park you plan on attending. Water slides are the No. 1 cause of injuries at water parks. It's important to follow ride directions. Rules like "feet first" are there for a reason" to keep riders safe. And always pay attention to the size and weight restrictions on water park rides. Riders who are too small can be thrown from the ride, and riders who exceed the maximum weight restriction can get stuck in chutes or build excessive speed and exit the ride too fast. Also, watch for the maximum number of riders allowed. If signs say limited to two riders per ride, don't pile four on trying to break a record. Make sure your children understand the need to follow the rules.

Additionally, it's important to understand your child's swimming ability and to take that into account when planning your water park family trip. National data shows fatal and nonfatal drownings have occurred at U.S. water parks. It can happen to anyone.

Statistically, wave pools carry the biggest drowning risk as they can be dangerous for smaller children or weak swimmers and can be chaotic with large numbers of people bobbing in the water. This can also make it very difficult to spot a swimmer in trouble, who could look like just another swimmer enjoying the waves. Close parental supervision is all the more important. Parents should stay within arm's reach of young or weak swimmers. Keep your eyes on your children and strongly consider putting your swimmer in a life jacket.

With all the patrons attending water parks each year, it's important to know what can be in the water besides other swimmers and chlorine. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, most people have about 0.14 grams of feces on their bottoms that can rinse off and contaminate water. The CDC also reports that in one year, 58 percent of public pools tested positive for E. coli, a marker of fecal contamination. Cryptosporidium, a parasite that can cause stomach illness, has a high tolerance to chlorine that enables it to survive for long periods in chlorinated swimming pool water. Both E. coli and crypto can make swimmers very ill, sometimes leading to hospitalization.

There are many ways to prevent water-borne illness such as teaching children not to drink pool water, taking frequent bathroom breaks, checking water diapers frequently, avoiding the water park if your child is sick, and showering before swimming AND after getting out but before heading home.

Families should know that all regulations of water and amusement parks fall upon the state and local government. Federal safety officials are not allowed to address safety problems at these parks, so a patchwork of local and state authorities bear the responsibility of safety oversight for amusement park rides. This means there is no consistent standard of regulation, and regulations vary state to state. Some states are strict, but other states elect for minimum involvement, making some parks self-regulated.

The AAP suggests looking into how the water park of your choice is monitored and regulated. SaferParks.org has a list of how amusement parks are regulated by each state. There is also a chart showing how injuries are to be reported and whether there are public records of reported injuries.

Safety extends beyond the pool, too. As always, it's important to bring and use sunscreen if you will be outdoors. You should also bring water to keep everyone hydrated.

Whether it's an indoor or outdoor park, water shoes can be a good investment. Pool deck surfaces can get slippery from a mix of water and sunscreen. Water shoes can give little feet extra traction and protect them from surfaces that can be rough, such as pool bottoms. Be sure to teach children to walk, not run, along the many slippery surfaces even if they have water shoes.

Scheduling activity breaks throughout the day can help kids take time to recharge, get a snack and have a bathroom break. Kids burn about 288 calories an hour playing in the pool. That kind of activity level can tire young swimmers, so it's important to exit the water periodically and rest.

Children and others who lack strong swimming skills should also wear life jackets when at a pool or water park. Some parks require swimmers to wear these, and staff can help you ensure the device is the right size and fits correctly for your child. Even when they wear life jackets, young children and those who cannot swim well need an adult who can swim within their arms' reach, providing touch supervision.

Remember that lifeguards are just one layer of prevention against drowning. Close, attentive, capable supervision when your child is in or around water is essential.

Andrew Bernstein, MD, FAAP is a general pediatrician in the Chicago area.

Is baby talk bad?

Why 'parentese' actually helps babies learn language

By KAREN STOLLZNOW
University of Colorado Boulder and Griffith University (The Conversation)

Many parents have heard the warning: Don't use baby talk with babies and toddlers. Instead, caregivers are often encouraged to speak properly and use adult-like language, out of concern that simplified speech could confuse children or delay language development.

But my research, which I highlighted in my new book, "Beyond Words," suggests the opposite is true. The sing-song voice many adults instinctively use with infants, sometimes called "baby talk" but more accurately known as "parentese" or infant-directed speech, actually helps children learn language.

Far from confusing babies, exaggerating phrases like "Loooook at the doggie!" capture their attention, help them detect patterns in speech and strengthen social bonding.

And the funny mistakes children make along the way, such as saying "goed," instead of "went," or "mouses" instead of "mice," are not signs that children are learning language incorrectly. They are evidence that children are actively working out the rules of language for themselves.

What parentese really is

When many people think of baby talk, they imagine nonsense phrases like "goo goo ga ga" or made-up words like "num nums." But that's not what linguists and developmental psychologists mean by parentese.

Parentese uses real words and grammatically correct sentences, but with exaggerated intonation, a higher pitch, stretched-out vowels and a slower rhythm. Think of the way a caregiver might naturally say: "Hi, baaaaby! Are you huuungry?"

There is little evidence that occasional playful nonsense words harm children's language development. But studies suggest that parentese in particular helps babies pay attention to speech, recognize patterns and engage socially.

Adults across cultures tend to speak this way to infants instinctively. Even people who swear they never use baby talk often slip into it around babies.

Researchers have found that infants actually prefer listening to parentese over regular adult speech. The exaggerated sounds and slower pacing make language easier to process. Babies are better able to pick out individual sounds, notice word boundaries and recognize patterns. In other words, parentese helps tune babies into language.

It also strengthens emotional connection. Language learning does not happen in isolation. Babies learn through warm, responsive interaction with caregivers during feeding, play, bath time and everyday routines.

Interestingly, humans are not the only ones who respond to this style of communication. Studies have even shown that cats react more positively when people use a baby-talk voice with them.

Babies are not passive learners

Children do not learn language simply by copying adults word for word. They actively test hypotheses about how language works. That is why toddlers make predictable and surprisingly logical mistakes.

One common example is overgeneralization. A child learns that people form the past tense of many verbs by adding "-ed," so they produce forms like "goed," "eated" or "comed."

These are not random errors. In fact, they show that the child has understood a grammatical rule and is trying to apply it consistently. The problem is simply that English is full of irregular exceptions. The same thing happens with plurals. Children may say "foots" instead of "feet" or "mouses" instead of "mice." Again, the logic behind these errors is sound.

Linguists sometimes say that children are little scientists, constantly testing patterns and revising their understanding as they receive more input from the world around them.

Why toddlers call everything a 'dog'

Young children also make predictable mistakes with meaning.

A toddler might learn the word "dog" and then use it for every four-legged animal they encounter. Linguists call this overextension. On the flip side, some children use words too narrowly. A child may use "dog" only for the family pet and not recognize that other dogs belong in the same category. Linguists call this tendency underextension.

These mistakes reveal how children organize and categorize the world around them. They are gradually mapping words onto objects, people and experiences.

Pronouns are another tricky area. Small children often confuse "me" and "you" because these words constantly shift depending on who is speaking. If a parent says, "I'll pick you up," the child hears themselves called "you." But when they try to repeat the sentence, they may not yet understand that the labels switch from speaker to speaker.

This is why toddlers sometimes say things that sound unintentionally cute or confusing. But beneath the confusion is a sophisticated learning process.

Even the Cookie Monster gets it wrong

Children's speech errors are so recognizable that they often appear in popular culture. Sesame Street's character Cookie Monster famously says things like "Me want cookie," while Elmo often refers to himself in the third person: "Elmo wants this." These speech patterns mirror real stages of child language development. Young children commonly confuse pronouns or refer to themselves by name before mastering forms like "I," "me" and "mine."

Despite occasional complaints from adults, there is no evidence that hearing this kind of speech harms children's language development. If anything, it reflects the natural experimentation children go through.

'Pasketti' and 'wabbit'

Pronunciation develops gradually too. Young children often simplify difficult sounds and groups of consonants. "Spaghetti" becomes "pasketti," "rabbit" becomes "wabbit" and "yellow" may come out as "lellow."

Speech-language specialists call these simplifications phonological processes. They are a normal part of development because some sounds are physically harder to produce than others. Sounds such as r, th, sh and ch tend to develop later because they require more precise control of the tongue and mouth.

Most children naturally outgrow these pronunciation patterns as their speech matures. However, persistent difficulties can sometimes signal a speech or language disorder, which may require professional support.

Mistakes are part of learning

Parents are often under enormous pressure to do everything right, including helping their children learn to speak a language. But children do not learn language by avoiding mistakes. They learn through interaction, experimentation and repetition.

Parentese helps babies focus on speech and engage socially. The funny mistakes toddlers make reveal that they are actively piecing together the complex system of language and are often signs of normal development. Language acquisition is messy, creative and remarkably sophisticated.

Speaking in an exaggerated sing-song voice to a baby is not something parents and caregivers need to feel embarrassed about.

Far from harming language acquisition, it may help lay the foundation for it.

Karen Stollznow is a senior research fellow of linguistics at the University of Colorado Boulder and Griffith University. The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts. This article is republished under a Creative Commons license. Read the original article at https://theconversation.com.

High blood pressure can happen at any age

Expert shares prevention tips

By MAYO CLINIC NEWS NETWORK (TNS)

Getty Images

LONDON — High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, can occur at any age. Its prevalence in people in early to mid-adulthood has been rising globally. Bianca Bandarra, M.B.B.S., a general practitioner and executive health physician at Mayo Clinic Healthcare in London, describes lifestyle factors that can influence risk and explains why treating high blood pressure early matters.

High blood pressure is a common condition that affects the body's arteries. If you have high blood pressure, the force of blood pushing against the artery walls is consistently too high. The heart has to work harder to pump blood.

If untreated, high blood pressure raises the risk of heart attack, heart failure, stroke and other serious health problems, including kidney and eye problems, dementia, and metabolic syndrome, a group of conditions that increases the risk of diabetes.

Hypertension develops without symptoms

High blood pressure can be a silent disease; people can have it without realizing it, Dr. Bandarra says.

"If high blood pressure isn't treated, it can damage blood vessels and organs over many years," she explains. "Because of that, we need to be proactive about prevention and early diagnosis. A simple blood pressure check is an important screening tool. People with conditions such as diabetes, kidney disease or a family history of hypertension may need more frequent monitoring."

If you have a family history of hypertension – for example, if one or both of your parents have it – it is sensible to be proactive and discuss with your healthcare team whether additional steps, such as monitoring your blood pressure at home, are appropriate.

While hypertension usually develops without symptoms, some people may notice warning signs if blood pressure becomes severely elevated, Dr. Bandarra says.

"Very high readings can sometimes be associated with headaches, especially in a hypertensive crisis," she says. "Some people may also feel pressure or discomfort behind their eyes."

Blurred vision, chest pain, palpitations, nosebleeds, shortness of breath and feeling tired and generally unwell can also occur, though these symptoms are not specific to hypertension and can have other causes. If you experience these symptoms, especially if they are new or severe, seek medical attention promptly, Dr. Bandarra says.

Lifestyle plays a role

Several lifestyle factors can influence the risk of developing hypertension, Dr. Bandarra says.

Factors that can raise the risk include having obesity or being overweight, tobacco use, alcohol use, high stress levels, eating too much salt, not consuming enough potassium and not moving enough.

Factors that can lower the risk include exercising, achieving a healthy weight, following a heart-healthy diet with fruits, vegetables and whole grains, exercising regularly, managing stress, avoiding tobacco and alcohol, and getting enough sleep.

"Some people may do all the right things and still develop hypertension," Dr. Bandarra says. "That's because genetics also play a role. We can take steps to prevent it from getting worse."

Stopping hypertension from progressing

Treatment typically includes following a healthy lifestyle – even for people whose hypertension has a genetic component – and medication. Tests such as blood tests, urine tests and an electrocardiogram may be needed to assess overall health and look for organ damage or related conditions.

Whatever your risk level, checking your blood pressure at home in addition to routine health checkups can be a safe and useful way to track your cardiovascular health.

"Use a validated device with the correct cuff size and follow proper technique," Dr. Bandarra says. "Raising awareness about high blood pressure for yourself, your friends and your family can make a real difference."

MAYO CLINIC Q&A

Melanoma is a type of skin cancer that begins in melanocytes, which are the pigment-producing cells. Andrey Popov / Dreamstime / TNS

Advances in staging and surgical treatment of melanoma

By MAYO CLINIC NEWS NETWORK (TNS)

DEAR MAYO CLINIC: I was just diagnosed with early stage melanoma, and I am being referred to an oncologist. What happens next? Will I need a lymph node biopsy, or are there cases where it can be safely avoided? What other surgical or nonsurgical treatment options might be recommended?

ANSWER: Melanoma is a type of skin cancer that begins in melanocytes, which are the pigment-producing cells. The pigment is called melanin. While it is less common than other types of skin cancer, it is more likely to metastasize, or spread, to other parts of the body. But when detected early, it is often highly treatable.

Early detection

After a biopsy confirms the diagnosis, your care team will evaluate details of the tumor, including its thickness, and other features seen under a microscope, along with a physical exam to determine the clinical stage and guide treatment recommendations.

In most cases, a procedure called wide local excision, which removes the melanoma along with a 1- to 2-centimeter margin of surrounding healthy tissue, is performed to ensure all cancer cells are removed. Some patients also may be recommended to have sentinel lymph node surgery. This procedure looks for cancer in the first lymph node, or nodes, that drain the area where the melanoma developed.

For years, sentinel lymph node biopsy has been an important part of staging melanoma. It can help determine how advanced the cancer is and whether additional treatment might be beneficial. However, it's also a surgical procedure, and like any procedure, it carries some risks and isn't necessary for everyone.

In fact, recent studies show that most people who undergo this operation, nearly 80 percent, do not have cancer in their lymph nodes. Because of this, researchers have been working to better identify which patients are most likely to benefit from the procedure and which patients may be able to safely avoid it.

Advanced options for melanoma staging

One newer approach involves genomic testing of the melanoma tumor. This test analyzes the activity of the specific genes in the tumor, along with clinical factors such as age and tumor thickness, to estimate the likelihood that the cancer has spread to nearby lymph nodes.

For some people with early-stage melanoma, a low-risk result on this type of test may indicate that the chance of lymph node involvement is very small. In these cases, patients and their care teams may decide, through shared decision-making, to safely avoid lymph node biopsy.

At the same time, it's important to note that lymph node biopsy remains an appropriate and important option for patients with higher-risk features. The decision is individualized, based on both traditional staging and new tools that help refine risk.

For many people with early-stage melanoma, surgery is the only treatment needed and is often curative. In these cases, follow-up care and regular skin checks are an important part of long-term management.

However, additional therapies may be recommended in certain situations. If melanoma is found in the lymph nodes or has higher-risk features, your care team may discuss adjuvant therapy, which is systemic treatment given after surgery to reduce the risk of recurrence. This may be immunotherapy or targeted therapy, depending on your individual situation.

Melanoma care is increasingly moving toward a more personalized approach. Traditional factors, such as tumor thickness and lymph node status, remain essential, and newer tools, such as genomic testing, are helping to refine decision-making.

This means that instead of a one-size-fits-all approach, treatment can be better tailored to each person's tumor biology. In some cases, that may mean avoiding unnecessary procedures, while still ensuring that higher-risk cancers are treated appropriately.

— Tina Hieken, M.D., Breast and Melanoma Surgical Oncology, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota

Hidden 'master switch' driving skin cancer growth and survival exposed

By KARL HILLE
The Baltimore Sun (TNS)

Tumors need two things to thrive: a good blood supply and a way to keep the immune system at bay. Scientists have discovered the protein that helps skin cancer achieve both, and proved that disabling it shrinks tumors and reactivates the immune system.

The molecule, known as the transcription factor HOXD13, helps control gene activity and is vital to the growth and survival of melanomas. The protein is critical for growing new blood vessels to supply the tumor with oxygen and nutrients. It also helps keep immune T cells from entering the tumor to do battle.

"Our study provides new evidence that transcription factor HOXD13 is a potent driver of melanoma growth and that it suppresses the T cell activity needed to fight the disease," study lead investigator Pietro Berico, of the NYU Grossman School of Medicine, told Sciencedaily.com.

When Berico's team blocked the activity of the protein, more T cells were able to enter the tumor. Some studies suggest that combining this kind of therapy with immunotherapy to boost the immune response could reverse one of the most aggressive cancers.

The skin is the body's largest organ, protecting against heat, sunlight, injury and infection, the National Institutes of Health website states. Skin also helps regulate heat and stores water, fat and Vitamin D. Skin cancer affects one in five Americans by age 70, and getting 5 or more sunburns doubles an individual's risk for skin cancer. However, when detected early, 99 percent of patients survive to the 5-year mark, according to the Skin Cancer Foundation. It can be fatal if not caught early, however, and melanomas – that affect the skin cells containing pigments – can be the most aggressive and lethal, spreading quickly to other organs if not caught.

The NYU study, supported by NIH grants and foundation sources, was published in February in Cancer Discovery.

Dreamstime / TNS

The skin is the body's largest organ, protecting against heat, sunlight, injury and infection, the National Institutes of Health website states.

FINANCE

Tom Gralish / The Philadelphia Inquirer / TNS

A "We Buy Gold" sign on Route 206 in Burlington County. As gold and silver prices have risen, dealers are seeing an increase in customers wanting to cash in jewelry they own or inherited.

With gold near $5,000 an ounce, Americans empty their attics, and buyers hire to keep up

By JOSEPH DISTEFANO
The Philadelphia Inquirer (TNS)

Gold doubled in price over the past two years, briefly topping $5,000 a troy ounce on Jan. 28. Since then, it's stayed close to that price, a record high even after discounting inflation.

Around the same time, silver topped $100 an ounce for the first time, and the price has been bouncing since, from $70 to $90.

Precious metals buyers say higher prices have enticed more Americans to cash out their late parents' jewelry and other gold and silver items, some of which have been in families for generations.

"The traffic has increased dramatically in all four stores," said Mark Schimel, who runs the Center City store of California-based Stack's Bowers Galleries, which auctions rare coins and sells the rest to industry. "Our staff has not been able to keep up. We've had to bring in additional people to process and ship."

Alloy Market, which buys precious metal coins and jewelry online from its industrial park offices near Newtown, Bucks County, has increased its staff to more than 20 people as transactions doubled, said Brandon Aversano, its founder. Sales topped $10 million last year and are on track to double this year.

Alloy uses weighing and imaging equipment to determine precious metals content and assign prices. The company has had to schedule appointments, set security protocols, and add guards to handle customers who have been finding their way to the office despite a lack of advertising,

What's driving precious metal inflation?

"The key driver is uncertainty – political uncertainty, inflation, interest rates, belief in the future value of the dollar, all of those things are in flux now," Aversano said.

Meanwhile, "central banks are buying tons of gold. Some high-net worth individuals want more," he said.

And the U.S. Geological Survey, which collects metal mining and demand data, says the new generation of giant high-speed and AI-generating data centers are demanding more precious metals for server boards and circuits. Nvidia and other chipmakers require gold.

"All of that results in a supply squeeze," Aversano said.

More people are treating the family jewelry box as a savings account for special needs, he said.

"Maybe they have medical bills. They want a vacation," Aversano said. "We're starting to get millennials with their parents' 1970s jewelry they don't want to wear. We offer 90 percent and greater vs. the spot price" for gold content.

His business, backed by state-funded Ben Franklin Technology Partners and private investors, has been profitable for the past two quarters, he said.

On April 20, Alloy launched an online jewelry resale market as an alternative to melting down items, giving sellers a cut of any resale price.

When Alloy Market opened in 2023, individual sellers would send in a pair of gold earrings or a ring and a charm bracelet. This year Alloy is averaging eight pieces per deal, for more than 500 customers on the busiest days, Aversano said.

Quick turnover

Most jewelry is only worth the value of its gold, minus a discount that covers handling, measuring, and profit. Jewels don't add much value.

"People fall in love with their items and think it's worth a premium," said Schimel, the store manager. His advice: "Lose that attachment."

He says $5,000 an ounce seems to have been a "psychological pressure point" that brought out more sellers.

"Not everyone is watching the spot prices of gold and silver. A lot of people don't know it's hit a record," Schimel said. "But their neighbor or their cousin sells it, they get the money, and then they decide to come in, too."

Silver's volatility forces a bigger discount from the quoted price of silver, compared to gold. "We can price close [to market prices] because we work on volume. But if we don't sell right away, we can lose money on it," Schimel said.

For example, on Jan. 28, silver hit $120 an ounce. Two days later it was at $85.

"We want people to be satisfied, but we also have to protect ourselves," Schimel said.

What happens when prices inevitably fall into a cyclical funk?

"It's a two-sided marketplace – small sellers, industrial buyers – traders can make money either way," said lawyer Gregory L. Seltzer, a partner at Ballard Spahr who specializes in startups and tech-based businesses. Alloy is a client.

Digital traders like Aversano have taken gold sales "into the open, with clear certainty on both sides," Seltzer said. "You want to eliminate getting caught in the middle, in the fluctuation of the pricing."

If unsold metals pile up, a dealer has to store them, which boosts expenses. "I'd be nervous if that became the business model long-term," Seltzer said.

Aversano says Alloy Market has had customers from all states. Four customer service representatives, working remotely, each average over 100 calls a day.

He's glad the staff has grown to where he can turn over routine work to employees, but he also feels the responsibility of supervising a larger business.

"I think of the kids on our health insurance, the families we pay," Aversano said. "It's hard to math everything out and be sure when it's time to hire another person."

SEC to ready plan for trading crypto versions of stocks

By SCOTT PATTERSON
Bloomberg News (TNS)

The Trump administration is poised to roll out a plan for trading digital versions of securities that could reshape the landscape of the American stock market as it continues to loosen the rules for free-wheeling crypto markets.

The Securities and Exchange Commission is expected to release its so-called innovation exemption for tokenized stocks as soon as this week, creating a new framework for betting on the fortunes of publicly traded companies, according to people familiar with the matter.

In a surprise move, the SEC is leaning toward a decision to allow the trading of tokens that do not have the backing or consent of the public companies whose shares they track, the people said. These "third party" tokens – effectively a novel way to speculate on the direction of the share price – would be tradeable on decentralized crypto platforms, though not all such instruments necessarily carry the same benefits as normal stocks, such as voting rights or dividends. Under the SEC's proposal, platforms that fail to provide those benefits would lose the right to list the tokens.

The move would mark one of the most significant regulatory tests yet of whether stock trading can migrate onto crypto infrastructure without the protections that govern traditional equity markets. By allowing third parties to create tokenized versions of public-company shares without issuer consent, the SEC would open a multiyear experiment in whether parallel markets for listed stocks can function outside parts of the regulatory framework designed to ensure fair pricing, transparency and investor protection.

The SEC has said tokenized securities fall into two categories: those tokenized by or on behalf of issuers, and those tokenized by third parties that are not directly affiliated with the issuers. SEC officials are still working on the exemption and details could change before it is released. An SEC spokesperson said the agency has met with hundreds of market participants and sought broad feedback on how to calibrate its rules for new types of trading.

Chip Somodevilla / Getty Images / TNS

The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission seal hangs on the facade of its building in Washington, D.C., in 2008.

Hot crypto trend

Tokenization of real world assets has become one of the hottest trends in crypto in the past year. It involves the creation of digital representations of assets such as stocks, bonds, real estate and private credit. Backers of the technology say the near-instant settlement and 24/7 trading it supports can help make markets more efficient and provide new benefits to investors.

Last week, the Senate Banking Committee advanced a landmark digital asset market structure bill. The so-called Clarity Act would establish the Commodity Futures Trading Commission as the primary regulator for large parts of the crypto industry while the SEC would retain authority to oversee digital securities.

U.S. stock markets are racing to prepare for a tokenized, around-the-clock trading future as the SEC, under the leadership of Chairman Paul Atkins, eases rules governing the crypto industry. Earlier this month, Bullish, the crypto exchange run by former New York Stock Exchange President Tom Farley, bought transfer agent Equiniti in a $4.2 billion deal. Transfer agents are stock-exchange record keepers that track ownership of shares and facilitate dividend payments, among other duties.

The NYSE is also building a venue using blockchain technology to allow for trading tokenized stocks and exchange-traded funds. Nasdaq, the second largest U.S. stock exchange, has said it is working on a token design that gives publicly traded companies more control over their shares in tokenized form.

Crypto carve out

Parts of the regulatory framework governing U.S. stock trading would not apply to third-party tokenized securities, which are essentially synthetic vehicles intended to mirror the shares of public companies. The exemption covers tokens traded on decentralized finance platforms, or DeFi, a $130 billion corner of crypto where investors trade, borrow and lend digital assets over protocols that run on automated code with minimal human intervention.

Several DeFi platforms have been targeted by hacks this year that have drained hundreds of millions of dollars from their coffers, underscoring the vulnerabilities that persist in the relatively nascent technology.

Expanding trading of tokenized securities to DeFi has raised concerns that they could add to the fragmentation of the stock market as assets linked to the same underlying stock change hands on multiple crypto venues.

The Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association said in a December post that the potential lack of standard requirements such as market interconnectivity and price transparency for tokenized markets could create the risk that markets "will fragment and become disorderly."

"If third parties can tokenize Apple or Amazon without the issuer at the table, there's no theoretical limit on how many wrappers of the same company exist at once," said Brett Redfearn, president of tokenization firm Securitize and former director of the SEC's trading and markets division. "This could create a whole new level of market fragmentation and could leave investors less certain what their shares are actually worth at any moment."

FOOD

Take advantage of asparagus season with these 3 quick recipes

By NICOLE HVIDSTEN
The Minnesota Star Tribune (TNS)

Minnesota asparagus stands tall each spring, as if it's proud to have made it through another winter.

It's one of the earliest vegetables ready each spring and – along with rhubarb, radishes, spinach and green onions – it signals that the delicious growing season is upon us.

Asparagus season typically begins in early- to mid-May, depending on what Mother Nature has up her sleeve, and lasts six to eight weeks. It's essential that those first tastes be enjoyed with little fuss – just a light saute in olive oil or a turn on the grill (or in the oven) with a couple of twists of salt and pepper is all it takes. Maybe a squeeze of lemon if you're feeling fancy.

Now since your appetite is whetted, and you'll want to include asparagus in everything during its fleeting season. And that is absolutely the right move. It is a perfect side dish, whether you're grilling meat or baking a quiche. It can be an ingredient in quiche, too, or just add leftover asparagus to scrambled eggs if you're in a rush. It's a natural in pasta dishes, with a light cream sauce to hold things together, and can be the star of a springtime soup. Try your hand at pickling, and extend its season even further; pickled asparagus is a natural charcuterie, and a must in a home-grown Bloody Mary bar.

But we're getting ahead of ourselves. When shopping for asparagus, look for spears with tightly closed tips. To prepare, local cookbook author Beth Dooley suggests snapping off and discarding the toughest part of the stalk and storing in the fridge like cut flowers – in a glass of water and tented with a plastic bag. (Or wrap the ends in a damp paper towel, then bag, and place in the refrigerator's crisper.)

Whether to choose thick or thin stalks is a matter of personal preference, and how you intend to use it. I can't resist pencil-thin spears cooked on the grill. But for these three recipes, either will do.

Parmesan Omelet Pie

Serves 6

Parmesan cheese and bacon pair well with the sweet flavor of asparagus in this omelet in a pie crust, imparting a delicious sweet and salty combination. Served for breakfast, brunch or lunch. From "Southern Roots" by Spring Council (Countryman, 2026).

FOR THE FILLING:

- 1 1/2 lb. asparagus, trimmed
- 4 thick slices of bacon, diced
- 8 eggs
- 1/4 c. milk
- 1/4 c. grated Parmesan cheese
- 1/4 c. chopped fresh Italian parsley
- 1/2 c. soft breadcrumbs
- 1 unbaked 9-in. pie shell (recipe follows)

FOR THE CRUST:

- 1 c. all-purpose flour
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 6 tbsp. unsalted butter, cold
- 3 tbsp. ice-cold water

To make the filling: Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

Slice the asparagus 1-inch thick on the diagonal, leaving the tips whole.

Fry the bacon in a medium skillet on medium-high heat until crispy, 3 to 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Drain on paper towels and set aside.

Beat the eggs and milk together in a large bowl. Add the Parmesan cheese, asparagus, cooked bacon, parsley and breadcrumbs. Stir to combine. Set aside.

To make the crust: In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour and salt. Cut in the butter with a pastry cutter until coarse crumbs form. Add the water and mix everything together to form a soft dough.

Gather the dough, press it into a ball, and then flatten it into a disk. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 15 minutes or up to 2 days.

When ready to prepare, remove the dough from the refrigerator. Lightly flour a work surface and roll the dough out into a 1/8-inch-thick round and press into a 9-inch pie plate. Place in the refrigerator until ready to use.

To assemble: Pour the filling mixture into the pie shell and bake for 25 to 30 minutes, or until it is puffy in the center.

Asparagus, Bacon and Creamy Smoked Salmon, Asparagus and Peas

Serves 4

Prep all the ingredients for this pasta dish and the sauce is ready in the time it takes to cook your pasta. When local asparagus is out of season, substitute it with zucchini, chard or spinach. Note: You can replace the smoked salmon with flaked cooked salmon or hot smoked salmon. From "Spinning Plates" by Anna Stanford (Hamlyn, 2025).

14 oz. pasta of your choice

FOR THE SAUCE:

- Finely grated zest and juice of 1 lemon
- 11/4 c. (300 g) crème fraîche
- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- 2 leeks, trimmed, cleaned and chopped
- 9 oz. (250 g) asparagus spears, woody ends removed, stems chopped, tips reserved
- 2/3 c. (100 g) frozen peas
- 5 1/2 oz. (150 g) smoked salmon, cut into strips (see Note)
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Chopped fresh dill, for garnish

Combine the lemon zest and juice and the crème fraîche in a bowl and set aside.

Cook the pasta in a large pan of salted boiling water for 8 to10 minutes, or according to the package instructions.

Meanwhile, heat a separate pan until hot, then add the olive oil, leeks and asparagus stems. Cook on a medium heat for 4 minutes before adding the asparagus tips and frozen peas. Season with salt and pepper, and cook for an additional 4 minutes.

Add the smoked salmon, stir, and remove from heat.

Stir through the lemony crème fraîche, adding a ladleful (about 1/3 cup) of pasta water to loosen.

Drain the pasta. Add the pasta to the pan, toss together with the sauce and serve. Garnish with fresh dill.

Cream of Asparagus Soup with Mushroom Ragu

Serves 4 to 6

The meaty flavor of the mushroom ragu elevates the sweet, earthy flavors of the creamy asparagus soup to a new level. The fresh herb garnish adds a boost of fresh flavors, just when you think you have tasted it all. From "Southern Roots" by Spring Council (Countryman, 2026).

Asparagus season typically begins in early- to mid-May, and lasts six to eight weeks.
Nicoleta Raluca Tudor / Dreamstime / TNS

FOR THE SOUP:

- 1 lb. asparagus, trimmed
- 3 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 4 c. chicken broth
- 1/2 c. half-and-half
- 2 tsp. finely grated lemon zest
- 2 tbsp. chopped fresh thyme
- 1 tbsp. chopped fresh Italian parsley
- 1 tbsp. chopped chives
- Mushroom Ragu (recipe follows)

FOR THE MUSHROOM RAGU:

- 1 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 2 tsp. olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- 1 shallot, finely chopped
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1 (3 1/2-oz.) pkg. shiitake mushrooms, cleaned and coarsely chopped
- 1 (8-oz.) package cremini mushrooms, cleaned and coarsely chopped
- 1/4 c. dry white wine

To make the soup: Wash the asparagus and cut it into small pieces.

Melt the butter in a stockpot over medium heat. Add the asparagus, garlic and salt and cook until fragrant, stirring occasionally. Add the chicken broth and simmer until the asparagus is tender but still green, 10 to 15 minutes. Allow to cool slightly.

Purée the soup in a food processor or blender. Return the soup to the pot. Add the half-and-half and lemon zest and bring the soup back to a simmer. Combine the thyme, parsley and chives in a small bowl.

To make the mushroom ragu: Melt the butter with the olive oil in a medium skillet over medium-low heat. Add the garlic, shallot, salt and mushrooms. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the mushrooms begin to soften, about 5 minutes. Add the wine and simmer over medium-high heat until the liquid is reduced but not dry, about 5 minutes.

To assemble: Spoon the mushroom ragu into the bottom of individual soup bowls or cups. Ladle the soup into each bowl and garnish with the fresh herbs.

QUICK FIX

Chickpea Tabbouleh Salad

By LINDA GASSENHEIMER
Tribune News Service (TNS)

For this simple salad dinner, I combined chickpeas with bulgur wheat for a hearty yet refreshing taste. Bulgur is made from whole wheat kernels that have been steamed, dried and then crushed, giving it a tender texture and a subtle nutty flavor.

One key technique for boosting flavor is to crush fresh scallions together with the bulgur, allowing the scallion juices to seep into the grains and infuse them with a savory aroma. Drained canned chickpeas add protein, while Cheddar cheese brings a rich, tangy note.

A handful of pistachio nuts finishes the dish with a delicate crunch, creating a vegetarian meal full of flavors and textures.

HELPFUL HINTS:

■ Let bulgar wheat sit a little longer if it is not soft after 20 minutes.

Chickpea Tabbouleh salad

Yield 2 servings

- 1/4 cup bulgur wheat
- 1/2 cup hot water
- 1/3 cup thinly sliced scallions
- 1 tomato cut into pieces 1-inch pieces
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 cup reduced-fat, shredded, sharp Cheddar cheese
- 1 14 ounce can chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- 1/3 cup unsalted pistachio nuts
- Salt and freshly ground black peppercorns
- 1/2 cup coarsely chopped mint
- 2 cups washed, ready-to-eat lettuce leaves.

Place bulgar wheat in bowl with hot water and let sit 20 minutes. While bulgar wheat is soaking, prepare remaining ingredients. Combine lemon juice and garlic in a bowl. Stir in olive oil. Drain bulgar and squeeze out as much moisture as possible with your hands. Add the scallions and squeeze again so that the scallion juices penetrate the wheat. Add to olive oil mixture. Fold in cheddar cheese, chickpeas and pistachios. Add salt and pepper to taste. Sprinkle mint on top. Divide the lettuce between two dinner plates. Divide the chickpea mixture in half and serve over the lettuce.

Linda Gassenheimer is the author of over 30 cookbooks, including her newest, "The 12-Week Diabetes Cookbook." Listen to Linda on www.WDNA.org and all major podcast sites. Email her at Linda@DinnerInMinutes.com.

KPop fries and Grogu shakes

Why Hollywood keeps feeding the fast-food machine

By IRIS KWOK
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

LOS ANGELES — Nearly half a century ago, Burger King released collectible glassware as part of a promotional campaign for the soon-to-be unexpected hit "Star Wars."

As "Star Wars" grew into a multibillion-dollar franchise – acquired by Disney from Lucasfilm in 2012 – the cups have become treasured collectibles for super-fans. Now, in the run-up to " Star Wars: The Mandalorian and Grogu," hitting theaters Friday, Burger King is revisiting its history with the franchise by providing four souvenir cups featuring characters from the movie with the purchase of one of the themed meals.

Burger King, which has embarked on a multi-year comeback effort – the struggling chain recently updated its Whopper – has looked to tie-in programs as a way to attract families. Netflix recently jumped onto the trend, rolling out big collaborations with McDonald's this year.

It's the latest chapter in the decades-long love affair between Hollywood and the fast-food industry. The partnership has survived seismic shifts in how people watch movies and recovered from a high-profile temporary breakup between two of the largest players – McDonald's and Disney – in 2006.

"It's a symbiotic relationship between the studios and these restaurants," said critic Matt Singer, who has reviewed tie-in menus for the film website ScreenCrush for more than a decade. "The movies get free or licensed promotion for their movie, and fans of the property are drawn to the fast-food place or the restaurant."

In the 1970s, major fast-food chains began to target kids in response to changing demographics and the rise of dual-income households, said University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill communication professor Avi Santo, who studies how entertainment franchises expand into consumer products and other merchandise. Collaborations with popular movies and TV shows were a crucial part of that strategy.

The now-defunct restaurant chain Burger Chef is credited with the invention of the kids' meal. The chain bundled food with items like character buttons, wooden nickels, hand puppets and drinking glasses.

McDonald's soon followed, launching in 1979 its Happy Meal, which came with a free circus animal trinket – a lion, elephant, hippo or bear. That year, McDonald's worked with Paramount to promote "Star Trek: The Motion Picture," another space adventure that would grow into a massive franchise, with a Happy Meal.

Burger King was among the earliest chains to feast on movie tie-ins when it promoted the original "Star Wars" in 1977. (Burger Chef also advertised the movie, running commercials with C-3PO and R2-D2 and giving out movie posters with the purchase of a 49-cent large soda.)

That "storied legacy" was why Disney tapped Burger King to promote its latest "Star Wars" movie, Lylle Breier, Disney's executive vice president of partnerships, promotions and events, said in an emailed statement.

Myung J. Chun / Los Angeles Times / TNS

TOP: Burger King's "Star Wars"-themed menu for "The Mandalorian and Grogu" includes cheddar ranch tots, left, a blue cookie shake, a BBQ Bounty Whopper, garlic chicken fries and garlic dip, and a Grogu souvenir cup. ABOVE:Burger King is also offering a blue cookie milkshake served in a Grogu-branded cup.

The menu, which was rolled out May 4 – a.k.a. Star Wars Day – marked the chain's first collaboration with Disney in more than 20 years. Offerings include a BBQ Bounty Whopper packaged in a clamshell box shaped like the Mandalorian helmet and a blue cookie milkshake – a nod to Grogu's favorite snack.

The goal with movie tie-ins is to "create an experience for [guests] that elevates their day … and their connection to Burger King," said Joel Yashinsky, the fast-food chain's chief marketing officer.

"Restaurants are a place people come together – just like a movie theater for a great film," Breier said. "That is why, for major event films like 'The Mandalorian and Grogu,' when done right, a fully integrated global marketing partnership program – like our campaign with Burger King – can create enormous cultural impact."

Asked how many food tie-in deals Disney aims to strike per year, Breier said the company focuses on quality over quantity. "We prioritize collaborations that are culturally relevant and creatively driven," Breier said.

Commercials are an important aspect of movie tie-in deals. One Burger King ad shows Grogu (also known as Baby Yoda) and his adoptive father, the Mandalorian, walking into a cantina, where a Burger King employee is showing off a tray of food. A hungry Grogu uses the Force to steal cheddar ranch tots, garlic chicken fries, a Whopper burger and a blue milkshake.

Yashinsky said the chain, which once ran about two or three movie tie-in promos annually, had scaled back to just one annually in recent years. Since he joined the company last year, he has overhauled marketing strategy, including "firing" its King mascot in a commercial that aired during the Oscars, and moved to return to two to three campaigns per year, not counting kids meals.

The chain saw success working with Paramount Pictures on a SpongeBob menu released in December, featuring items like a Krabby Whopper with a bright yellow bun and a Patrick Star-themed strawberry shortcake pie. On a February earnings call, Joshua Kobza, chief executive of Restaurant Brands International, Burger King's parent company, said the campaign "drove strong guest engagement and brought families back." The menu helped beef up repeat visits at Burger King in January even after the promotion ended, Kobza said.

Burger King's partnership with Disney for "The Mandalorian and Grogu" was "mutually beneficial," Yashinsky said, and did not involve royalties or other direct payments. Breier declined to comment on Disney's financial arrangement with Burger King.

Fast-food partnerships endure as Hollywood evolves

Hollywood has undergone a dramatic transformation over the last few decades. Despite the rise of streaming, the industry's appetite for fast-food partnerships remains unchanged.

Even Netflix, the world's largest streaming service, sees old-school fast-food tie-ins as a way to reach a wider audience and deliver a stronger message.

"[McDonald's has] their own following, their own place and culture, their own ability to speak to audiences in their own voice," said Magno Herran, Netflix's vice president of global brand marketing and partnerships. "When you marry that with Netflix and our fandoms and our ability, that's just a multiplier to what we can do."

The streaming behemoth, which has already worked with Kentucky Fried Chicken in the U.S. and Burger King across Latin America, earlier this month launched its largest-ever fast-food collaboration in terms of global reach with McDonald's: a Happy Meal to promote "Tales From '85," the "Stranger Things" animated spinoff, Herran said.

Following the explosive success of the Oscar-winning animated film "KPop Demon Hunters," many brands reached out to Netflix in the hopes of getting in on the action.

"We were really cautious about who we brought into that fold, because we wanted to maintain that authenticity for the fans," Herran said.

He said the decision to work with McDonald's on "KPop Demon Hunters" meals boiled down to the chain's massive following, cultural influence and willingness to co-develop creative elements, including commercials voiced by the original actors.

The "KPop Demon Hunters" collaboration with McDonald's, released in late March, featured two "dueling" adult meals that each came with a collectible card. In a play on the rivalry between the two K-pop groups in the movie, fans "voted" for their favorite by buying one of two meals. The first was a Saja Boys-themed breakfast featuring a spicy sandwich. The other was a Huntr/x meal featuring ramyeon-flavored fries and themed sauces, including a purple-hued mustard inspired by demon patterns.

Jennifer Healan, vice president of U.S. marketing, brand, content and culture for McDonald's, said in a statement that its partnerships with brands and popular IP are aimed at "honoring the fandom."

"Sharing the pen with our partners from start to finish allows us to build something that feels true to the story and is genuinely exciting for our customers," Healan said. "It's how we bring together passionate fan bases and two cultural engines to create experiences fans want to be a part of – at a scale that only McDonald's can deliver."

McDonald's declined to share specific details about its partnership with Netflix.

The rise of streaming services has upended the traditional business model for movie marketing, Santo said.

Throughout the 1980s and '90s, licensing deals were usually finalized 18 months to two years before a film hit theaters, he said. Promotional campaigns were typically rolled out about six weeks ahead of the release to build anticipation. Netflix has broken the theatrical window, giving studios more flexibility in scheduling promotions.

At the same time, audience attention spans have shortened, Santo said. Licensing approvals and manufacturing can take months, so movie merch often arrives long after audiences have moved on, increasing the risk of overproduction.

The food itself has also evolved. Singer, who has eaten dozens of movie and TV meals at many chains, began reviewing them in 2015, starting with Denny's entire "Fantastic Four" menu, which included four entrees, a smoothie and a Dr. Doom lava cake. Over the last decade, he has noticed that tie-in foods have become increasingly outlandish.

At Burger King, he has consumed many Whoppers with colorful buns, including purple for "The Addams Family" and red for "Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse." At IHOP, he has eaten purple goo-coated pancakes, a promotion for "Wonka," and sugary highlighter-green pancakes for "The Grinch."

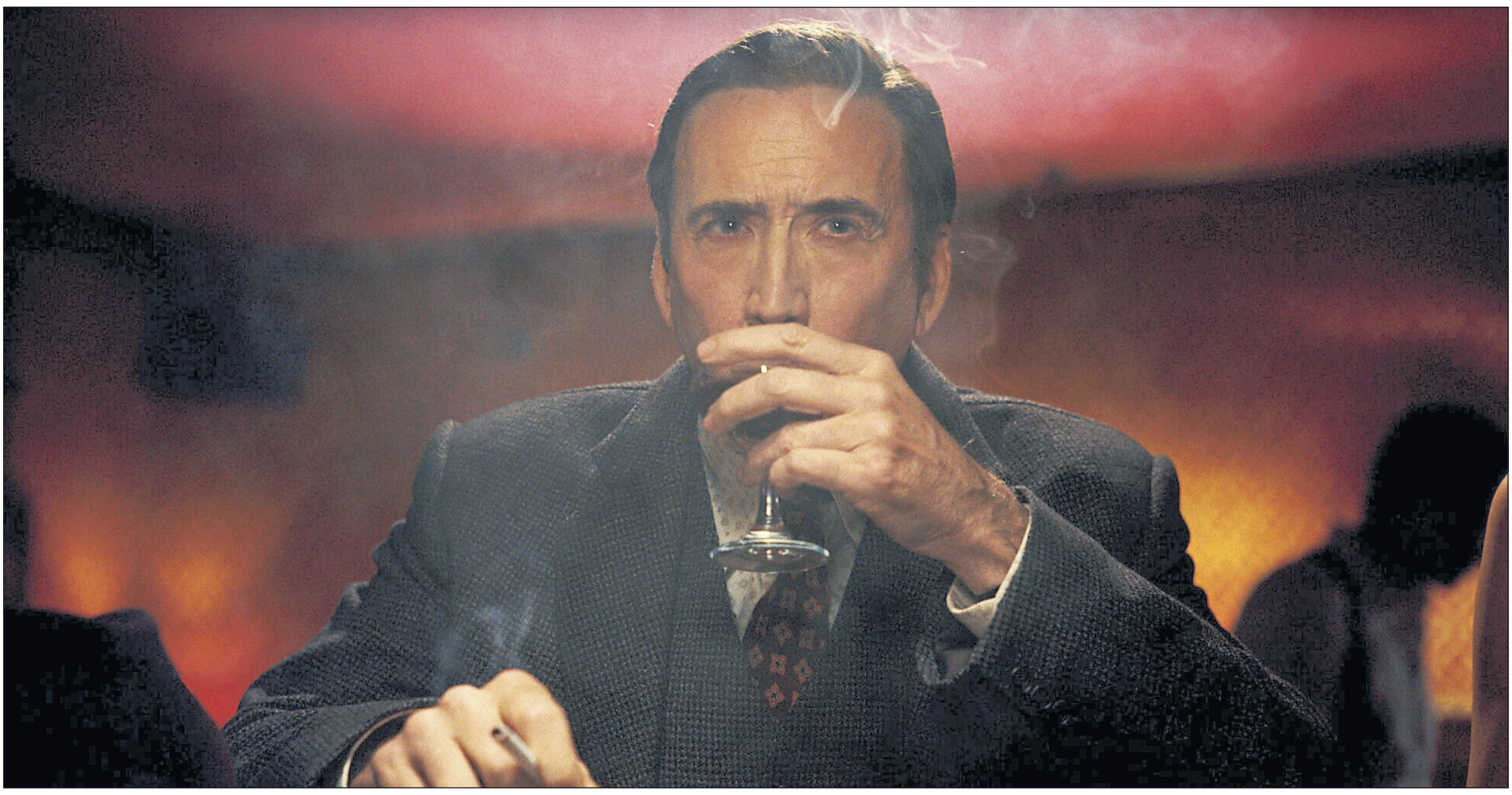
Singer believes social media is the culprit.

"If it's weird and attention-grabbing and will get shared, it almost is irrelevant whether or not the food is edible or delicious," he said. "As long as people are going, 'Have you seen this?' and sharing it, it's raising awareness of both the restaurant and the movie or the television show, [and] it's done its job."

Yashinsky disagreed. While Burger King may occasionally add some "pizzazz" to its menu items to make the movie meals appear more "interesting and Instagrammable," the company's priority is to serve "great-tasting food," he said.

He insists that includes the blue cookie milkshake.

SERIES REVIEW



Nicolas Cage as Ben Reilly in Prime Video's "Spider-Noir."

Prime Video / TNS

'Spider-Noir' remixes Spider-Man

By ROBERT LLOYD
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

The endlessly exploitable Spider-Man is back in "Spider-Noir," a retro tale set in a recognizable New York in an inconsistent 1933 (to judge by a preponderance of cultural referents). There is a comic-book precedent for this version of the character, called simply the Spider, though research tells me that, costume and superpowers aside, he is different in nearly every respect. I don't suppose that will be an issue for most of you.

Shot in "authentic" black and white, the eight-episode series, which premiered Monday on MGM+ channel and streams Wednesday on Prime Video, is something of a stunt, but one that offers a reasonable, (imperfectly) period-appropriate approach to the material. (Stylistically, it belongs to a later decade.) An available colorized version, which seems primarily a sop to younger viewers who refuse to watch anything in black and white, works less well, flattening and softening the image, making the special effects look less special, the expressionist photography less expressive and ordinary scenes more artificial. You can probably tell which I'd choose, but you do you.

Nicolas Cage, in his first live-action television role, plays Ben Reilly, a down-at-the-heels private eye, spiking his morning coffee with whiskey helpfully provided by his knowing secretary, Janet (Karen Rodriguez), and barely scraping by on the occasional divorce case. Five years earlier, as the Spider, he was a super-powered guardian of the people; but he gave it up after the love of his life was murdered on the Spider's account. In this variation, she's the one who told him that with great power comes great responsibility, that well-worn Marvel homily, quoted in this world as if it were the work of Abraham Lincoln and not Stan Lee. But Reilly, who calls himself a coward and claims to be no hero, regards his mutant abilities as "a part of me I wish never existed. With no power, there's no responsibility."

Naturally, in the Spider's absence, things have gone to pot in Gotham. "The city's a mess," says Reilly's best and only friend, unemployed reporter Joe "Robbie" Robertson (national treasure Lamorne Morris, keeping it real, relatively speaking). "The people could use a hero."

'Spider-Noir'

Rating: TV-MA

How to watch: Prime Video

"Well, I hope they find someone," says Ben.

Nevertheless, you will not be surprised that, much against his will, Reilly will fall into a web, tee-hee, of intrigue; involving the city's bootlegging crime boss, Silvermane (Brendan Gleeson, serving a full Irish breakfast), whose superpower is that he has very nice hair; Silvermane's sort-of mistress, femme fatale nightclub singer Cat Hardy (Li Jun Li), a bird in a gilded cage; and Cat's bodyguard, Flint (Jack Huston), who has gone missing. Nor will it shock you to learn that other super-powered entities will turn up, to give our hero – who soon enough will be swinging through town, somehow never losing the fedora perched atop his masked head – someone his own size to pick on him.

To coin a phrase, some are born super-powered, some become super-powered and some have superpowers thrust upon them, and in every case this comes with a serving of tragedy and trauma, for heroes and villains alike. If there's a theme to "Spider-Noir," beyond "make another Spider-Man show," it's this, and there's a spine of sadness that runs through the series, its best and most depressing feature (and, taking "noir" at is word, fitting to the genre).

The photography and production design, achieved through whatever combination of backlot shoots, dressed locations, digital environments and black magic, work better and worse (though never bad) from shot to shot, but Alfred Hitchcock used background projections and model trains, and it's nice to see Manhattan before those pencil-thin supertowers began polluting the skyline. (It's the city as King Kong first knew it.)

The pacing can drag at times. The music goes everywhere but the represented period and characters quote lines from movies yet to be released. The writing and the acting boldly flirt with cliche and caricature, which, as the show is about 100 percent pastiche, drawn from films more than three-quarters of a century old, could scarcely be avoided and isn't really a problem. (In a way, it's the point.) You may spot a scene pinched from Orson Welles' "The Lady From Shanghai," narrative echoes of "Casablanca," a line playing off James Cagney's final words in "White Heat," just off the top of my head.) But the overall what and why of the story is clever and the conclusion satisfying.

Cage, who voiced a different version of the "Spider-Noir" character in the animated "Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse," is a good choice for the weary gumshoe. (The series is about 75 percent detective story, 25 percent superhero) Metafictionally, he'll bust out an Edward G. Robinson imitation, mouth Cagney dialogue sitting alone at the movies. But the main model is Humphrey Bogart, whose looks Cage's recall more than a little; Bogart played Sam Spade and Philip Marlowe in the films most associated with those characters, whose mordant humor creator-writer Oren Uziel seeks to replicate here, with fair success. One can forget that Cage, who finds a middle way between doing a bit and playing a person, is a good comic actor, and not merely a weirdo.

MOVIE REVIEW

Fashion and politics get a radical makeover in the riotous *'I Love Boosters'*

By AMY NICHOLSON
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

If Charlie Chaplin were alive – and blitzed out of his mustachioed gourd – his favorite filmmaker would be Boots Riley. The two auteurs share a flair for spinning societal critique into maniacal physical comedy. In "Modern Times," the Little Tramp slithered through a factory's giant gears. In Riley's "I Love Boosters," a fashion tycoon named Christie Smith (Demi Moore) lives in a luxury skyscraper with floors slanted at an imposing 45-degree angle that only she has the ability to walk. Her visiting employees stumble, flail and skid.

"I Love Boosters" is a maximalist delight with practical sight gags including a menacing Indiana Jones-style boulder of unpaid bills, car chases done with unabashed miniatures, actors who disappear mid-pursuit like human Whack-A-Mole and a horde of stop-motion baddies that would make Ray Harryhausen leap to his feet and applaud.

The story pits Moore's egotistical, tyrannical Christie against a pack of small-time shoplifters, Corvette (Keke Palmer), Sade (Naomi Ackie) and Mariah (Taylour Paige), a.k.a. the Velvet Gang. Scheming Corvette is Palmer's newest marvelously louche heroine. Lately, she's making a feast of roles that all remind me of that old sitcom episode in which Lucille Ball gobbles chocolates on a conveyor belt. A designer, Corvette once aspired to create her own clothing line but couldn't get her spike-heeled foot in the door. For now, she peddles stolen outfits to sleazy men and grateful women while squatting in a shuttered fast-food joint where her wall art is a vestigial menu of fried chicken.

Christie calls the Velvet Gang "lazy." But staying afloat is a full-time hustle, especially when bedazzled Corvette, headstrong Sade and dippy Mariah don't always agree on their squad goals. Corvette gets distracted by a mysterious French model played by LaKeith Stanfield, smoldering like Rudolph Valentino. (When Corvette stares at him thirstily, Natasha Braier's cinematography goes all shimmery-wobbly like he's a living mirage.) Meanwhile, Sade is taken in by a huckster named Dr. Jack (Don Cheadle) who hawks a pyramid scheme called Friends Being Friends, a pretense of community. Paige's Mariah is airhead-ish comic relief and fabulous at it.

"I Love Boosters," a film written and directed by Boots Riley.

Neon / TNS

Not so long ago, well-meaning film folk convinced rising directors that the best way to get their ideas across was to make something personal and vérité, derailing a generation of talent into the muck of samey coming-of-age movies that audiences didn't really want to see. Going to indie festivals in that era felt like being lost in a gray fog. But Riley's debut, the 2018 sci-fi satire "Sorry to Bother You," was a rare bright light. (In short: a telemarketer discovers his boss' boss is turning workers into horses.) An Oakland-based musician and activist, Riley was confident enough in his identity that he couldn't be knocked off course.

"Boosters" is agit-prop that prioritizes entertaining the crowd. It roils with observations about teamwork, inequality and success, but presents as a spangled, stoner-comedy extravaganza with the moxie to give a Monty Python-esque raspberry to realism. Workers crouch on starting blocks to sprint for a snack during their 30-second lunch break; characters switch actors in the middle of a take, pretending that the swap is merely a disguise. Even within a scene, mayhem stacks up like teetering plates. At a Dr. Jack seminar held in a furniture store, Cheadle's unrecognizable cameo competes with kids jumping on a couch and a spasmodic massage chair pummeling Corvette's face.

Excess is the key word. "Boosters" is impossible to fully absorb. Yet I liked those distracting kids – I liked the life and the mess – and I like watching a director go full-gusto as he builds his universe. All the funny details gesture toward Riley's main idea: O ur modern times feel anxious and isolating.

The film doesn't have to take a swipe at AI; the handmade craft is its own rebuke. So much human work has gone into every bit of mischief that the crew's effort makes the audience put in more effort, too, to figure out why each shot was worth the time it took to accomplish. Minor moments have major intentionality. When one chase scene halts as the stop-motion pursuers squabble about their battle cry, the evident labor in the aside elbows us to run with the idea that movements sabotage themselves.

The plot also includes an invention called the Situational Accelerator. I barely understood it – to me, it functioned like a random madness machine. But gauging by the name, I suspect Riley zapped it on his own script. So, too, did all of his department heads on their own fiefdoms and the oddball band Tune-Yards on the score, a cacophony of circus oompahs, mouth harps and kazoos.

Riley is criticizing the global economy but setting this caper in the fashion world keeps the style interesting. The Velvet Gang's aesthetic changes every sequence: preppy plaids, florals, raver neons and a swollen pink jumpsuit that makes Corvette look like a hyper-feminine Gumby. Even when tasked to outfit the girls in monotone uniforms, the costume designer Shirley Kurata adds individuality with textures of sheers, cutouts and pleats. Kurata also did the ensembles for the Oscar-nominated "Everything Everywhere All at Once" with its wardrobe of googly eyes and Elvis jumpsuits. Believe it or not, she's topped herself.

Beyond looks, getting dressed is a daily expression of who we are and how we want to appear. (Even not caring about getting dressed is a choice – rewatch the original "The Devil Wears Prada" for that speech.) At the same time, our clothes also tell a financial saga that gets more complicated every year, especially as we become more aware of shipping routes, import taxes and the retail and environmental fallout from disposable fast fashion. Dressing head-to-toe in ethical clothing can feel as impossible as a stuck zipper, especially now that legacy manufacturers like Eddie Bauer and Champion have sold their brand names to a shoddier conglomerate.

The film prefers bold vibes to economic lectures, but Riley figures we'll be conversant enough in corporatese to understand what's really going on when one of Christy's store managers (Will Poulter) patronizingly orders his underpaid employees to redefine money as merely "meaningful units of light." One of those employees, played by Eiza González, will make a one-scene farce of delivering a dissertation on Karl Marx while vaping. Her use of "dialectics" gave me a vicarious headache. Point taken: Action has more impact than words. (In keeping with the film's raccoon-in-a-trash-can spirit, González's character seems to steal her style from real-life goth beauty influencer Gabbriette.)

Trying to weave together an impossible number of threads means some moments stick out sloppily, like a character's reveal of a magically healed wound we never knew they had. It's also apparent toward the end – when "Boosters" seems to run out of either money or time – that the camera framing gets uncomfortably tight.

A second big speech toward the end will almost certainly get groans that are as much our fault as his. No one likes being told that building a better society takes work. If we did, we'd probably be actually doing it. But Riley has put in so much work of his own wowing us with pointed pranks that he's earned the right to deliver an earnest plea. "Boosters" isn't perfect and that doesn't matter. The audacity of it – the exuberance Riley puts into making and loving movies – is what I want to see more of from every filmmaker, fashionista and human being still grinding at their own creative ambitions.

'The Audacity' creator and its star want to remind you online privacy is a myth

By YVONNE VILLARREAL
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

Photos by Ed Araquel / AMC / TNS

Billy Magnussen as Duncan Park in AMC's "The Audacity."

The catalyst for Jonathan Glatzer to create "The Audacity," AMC's dark satire of Silicon Valley that takes aim at the desperation that plagues it, began as a father witnessing his teenage son's relationship with tech.

Like many parents raising children in a tech-dominated culture, Glatzer, early on, tried to help his son understand the unseen trail his online activities leave behind with every swipe, tap, post or video viewed – and the digital reputation that can be shaped and set from that. Glatzer succeeded, almost too well.

"I found myself being in one of those equivocating positions of saying, 'Well, it's not good and yes, they are watching and creating a data footprint about everything that you do and watch, and your various proclivities and inclinations, but it's not so bad,'" says Glatzer, whose previous credits incude "Succession" and "Better Call Saul." "It's just negotiating the middle ground, negotiating the thing you can live with in a world where it's really difficult to live without tech. And he didn't buy it. I really did see, through his eyes, this dilemma of: How do you live in this world and maintain the growth and evolution of your own voice and be an individual?"

Such questions and dilemmas fuel the tension of the series, primarily through Duncan Park (Billy Magnussen), the narcissistic and morally unhinged CEO of a data-mining startup called Hypergnosis who is desperately trying to get his company acquired by the Apple-esque Cupertino, and willing to go to deceitful lengths to do it. He confides those tactics to his therapist, JoAnne Felder (Sarah Goldberg), who has her own scheme going, trading stocks on the information shared by her powerful or connected clientele during sessions. When Duncan discovers this, he proposes a threat in the form of deal: If she'll help him, he won't expose her.

Like a pinball hurled into the the modern tech bubble, Duncan has spent the season trying to stay in the game without getting stuck or free-falling into oblivion too quickly. After he's ousted from his data-scraping firm, he pivots to create a new unethical startup called P.I.N.A.T.A. (Privacy Is Not a Thing Anymore) with a subscription service concept: customers pay a $29.99 monthly fee to ensure their data is kept private – and if they're willing to pay an extra $300 for the platinum tier, they can have full access to everyone else's personal details.

As the series nears its Season 1 finale, streaming Sunday on AMC+ and airing on AMC May 31, the stakes are high for Duncan's quest for tech notoriety as he seeks to double down on exploiting user data to scale his algorithms by expanding into DNA.

Over separate video calls, The Times caught up with Glatzer and Magnussen to discuss what intrigues them about the machinations of Silicon Valley and how their relationship with tech has changed. These are edited excerpts from the conversation.

Heading into the finale, Duncan is faced with the ethics of this tech deal involving his startup P.I.N.A.T.A. What intrigued you about his dilemma?

GLATZER: This has happened to us a lot in society. It happened in a big way with Sam Altman [CEO of OpenAI], where he seems like a nice guy, he's maybe got his s— together, not for profit. That's a good idea. Then things start to get more corrupted, and money plays a huge role ... as it always has throughout human history. What Duncan comes to is this notion of, what's the opposite of ethical data? Because that's what his old firm is now touting. It's like, wait, why not go full goblin mode? Duncan is saying: "Privacy is not a thing anymore."

He gets very enthusiastic about what if we look at that hypocrisy and just bulldoze over it. There are no laws stopping us from doing that. If there are meant to be laws, then Congress should pass them. What he does in the finale is really put it to Silicon Valley and says: You already do everything that I'm saying – you know when a woman, one of your users, is going through a menstrual cycle; you know when to sell her stilettos or when to sell her sweatpants. Wouldn't it be amazing to add to that genetic data? How great would it be to be able to market to somebody who is prone to baldness, alcoholism, cancer, autism, schizophrenia? This is just the ultimate expression of data marketplace with zero rules.

But from Duncan's perspective, it's like, "Look, let's offer the same thing as a third party to anybody who wants it and is willing to pay us a nominal subscription fee. Let's offer access to the same data that we get, see what happens." Maybe people wise up and start to get VPNs and stop accepting cookies and all the rest of it, and maybe there's even a bigger uprising that's like, "We don't like our personal lives being mined and exploited." But in the meantime, until that day comes, he's going to exploit it and make some money.

MAGNUSSEN: It's a very interesting character study of what you're willing to sacrifice. I don't blame him as much as the culture of Silicon Valley behind him, more than anything. And that's why I think I empathize with Duncan a lot, is that the culture that he's been brought up in within Silicon Valley is that tarnishing, gritty, fight your way tooth and nail to the top.

There's the moment where Zach Galifianakis' character, Bardolp, talks about the internal negotiation that many innovators face, Do we want to save the world or control it? Heal or conquer? "Both have their charms," he says, "But most of us go Dr. Evil." How did your conversations with people in tech help you understand where the ambition and attempt s to bring about useful advances gives way to that?

GLATZER: I don't think anybody that I spoke with in Silicon Valley or in that world – very few of them had that honesty in terms of self-knowledge. To make my characters more interesting than that, I wanted them to have moments of self-awareness that would stick like a splinter in their brains and not let them off the hook. In [Episode] 108, Duncan is not let off the hook. There's a cost for Duncan doing all this. And for Bardolp having this power, having the money of Midas, and [he] has spent several decades never really being told no, never having a come-to-Jesus moment, like he does with Ruffage [Rob Corddry], I think that there's something about him hearing that unfiltered, unvarnished rage at who he is and his choices along the way would have rattled him deeply and he doesn't react well to that.

I think that's an important aspect to our show – we try to always make sure that there is a price to pay, even if it is metaphorical, even if it's sometimes not metaphorical at all, it's quite real, but that there's a consequence to living an unexamined life. All of us on God's green earth are forced to reckon with out own b------ from time to time. And several characters in the final episode are forced into that uncomfortable corner, and they all react quite different.

Billy, how do you feel about this idea of what Duncan is facing?

MAGNUSSEN: The show is good for the audience in the sense that it's exposing the humanity behind these people in the way they think. That power is more important than humanity. That's the scary part about the show. It's quite interesting to show that mirror up to society. These dilemmas that these people in the industry are going through, I wonder if you and I, if we were in that same position, how we would do it. Would we become greedy? I would love to say no. I would want to spare people a little more, but at the same time, we look at this industry, the film industry, television, I think politics – to have these politicians going into these positions where they're going to do good for people and then you realize, "Wait, who's in your pocket?" That recognition or exposure with our show is a very exciting thing to be talking about.

Duncan (Billy Magnussen) and JoAnne (Sarah Goldberg), his therapist, who has her own secrets, in a scene from Episode 7 of "The Audacity."

It's funny about social media and the internet, and this thing that we've been working on, that's been a part of our lives and forced down our throats to be a part of and, for some, creates our value as a human on this platform that we can just delete. There's no place called Instagram, but the fact that we put so much value and power into that – why are we all playing that game? It's our choice to really respond and acknowledge this s--- and maybe take action in our personal lives.

Is it easier to find the empathy and humanity in playing a character desperate to attain the power than someone already holding it, like an Elon Musk or a Jeff Bezos?

MAGNUSSEN: What I think when you become that powerful, you don't get auto-corrected by the people around you. As a human to human, you go: "You really are lost because you had no one around you to ground you or just wake you, like slap you around a little bit and be like, "Wake up!" I just wish they asked themselves: Should I do this? I know I can do this, but should I do this? There's a 15 percent chance AI will destroy us, but we'll still sign the agreement. I don't know if I empathize with them.

How has the show changed your relationship with tech? Have you deleted apps? Are you reading the terms and conditions any more closely?

MAGNUSSEN: Plenty of apps [have been deleted]. Don't accept cookies is a real big thing. It's not a knock on technology. It's just about being more aware of the privacy that's being taken away from you. Also, invest my own personal time in people, not programs, because I do think technology is a beautiful way to start a revolution, to communicate with people, to educate yourself. I'm just so sad the money people make off causing us to fight more than love more. They're ramming AI down our throat right now. You know what, show me it cures cancer before I say yes to it. Show me that. Let's keep working on it before we throw it in there, but also the environmental factor of all these data centers and stuff – holy cow. It's our choice as consumers too. We do have power. I do think tech companies have pushed us away from feeling like we have power.

GLATZER: I definitely have become much more suspicious of data collection. I don't want to not engage with the world that everyone else is engaging with, but I'm not going to do it at the cost of being a widget to them, to being a target of an algorithm. I think people should try turning it off for a day and see what happens – and it's almost impossible, I realize that.

My house burnt down in the Altadena fires. It was ironically days after I wrote the episode in which there's a wildfire, in which Duncan and Lily's house burns down. I will say, after I lost all of my physical possessions, I was very grateful to have my photographs and other things on the cloud. That was a gift. I understand how tech can help. I understand how tech has helped in medical procedures. Hasn't cured cancer, like they said it would and many other things, [like] climate change, they're making it so much worse.

I also hear stories about people in Silicon Valley who work in tech who stop wearing sunscreen because they believe AI is going to cure skin cancer, they've started smoking cigarettes because they believe AI is going to cure lung cancer. Color me skeptical, but I'm not sure that inhaling toxins into your lungs is something that AI can really cover. That those people are working in tech is frightening to me.

I was curious if you were doing this video call from the app or your browser.

GLATZER: Browser. The app is embedded in your computer and is much more capable of tracking your behavior. You're letting the Trojan horse into the house.

I want to talk about how you wanted to explore AI in the series. Jonathan, with Alexander, the AI created by Martin (Simon Helberg), there are limitations to its abilities, yet there is potential for good. It's unclear, though, whether that will always be t he case. What interested you in that thread?

GLATZER: I always feel like the message of "2001: A Space Odyssey" is sympathy for HAL when he's singing "Daisy [Bell"] at the end. It's so sad and his conflict was that human beings with conflicting directives confuse him. For me, I don't hate AI. I don't know what that even means, particularly. It's still zeroes and ones. What I am critical of are the people who fail to see the inevitable dehumanization of tech's 7 billion or so users, whether that be the insecurity of one's job being replaced by a bot. There was a picture taken near my office in New York, a banner or ad that had a perfectly constructed human face that was clearly not a human and it said, "Stop hiring humans." [Glatzer pulls up the image of the advertisement on his phone.]

I just feel like I'd like to talk to that person for a little while, perhaps I need to hog-tie them in order to have a conversation that I truly want to have with them. But the person who came up with that ad campaign or approved it, somewhere along the line, there was a human being behind that. There was a person who said, "Yeah, let's go with that," and that person has this, unfortunately, very common ability to separate themselves from their own humanity or root against it. "Stop hiring humans" says the quiet part out loud.

Do you find yourself more interested in the headlines out of the tech industry these days or the figures, Billy?

MAGNUSSEN: I'm really interested in the fact that it's a small group of people that affects 7.5 billion people. I want to know them. Who are these jokes? And why are we giving them so much power?

The season finale is upon us. What do you want to tease about Duncan's big speech at Code Watch? And what are you interested in exploring in Season 2?

GLATZER: I love that it was coming out of his mouth, these truths about how this world operates, and the bracing honesty with which he speaks to the Silicon Valley community. It's coming from Duncan Park, who is somebody who's arguably failed up, who was one of those data merchants himself. It's not Nixon going to China, but there's some analogy there that it basically rings more true for me coming from him. And it's probably because we're so bifurcated as a society where a liberal person spouting views is tuned out, but a conservative person who's coming over and now shares some liberal views is platformed. But it's the fact that he does upend, or seems to be poised to upend the profit center of Silicon Valley.

And Billy, tell me about the slide. It's always entertaining to watch Duncan go down that thing.

MAGNUSSEN: That slide is great. Everyone on set was scared, they're like "Can we go down the slide?" Everyone wants to go down [it]. I just kept going down. I don't care. It's a slide, that's what you're meant to do! You're supposed to slide! On one side, there's no staircase down and you'd have to walk almost half a football field to get down the stairs and everybody would be like, "F--- it, I'm just doing the slide."

BOOKS

In Luke Goebel's 'Kill Dick,' the L.A. sunshine hides some very bad things

By PETER LARSEN
The Orange County Register (TNS)

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Ten years and four drafts ago, Luke Goebel sat down to channel all the sorrow and anger he felt about the state of the nation, the corruption he believed seeped from every corner of society, and the death of his brother into the novel that became "Kill Dick."

"What you see at the end, this sunshine noir, this L.A. thriller, dark, luminous and humorous social satire was the very last iteration," Goebel says on a recent video call. "And really came even after the book had been sold.

"The book was really a way to work through the loss of my brother, who died of an Oxy overdose in 2011, and the grief and rage that I felt," he says.

"It was also a way of trying to come to terms with the splintering of our society and the degradation of the moral character of the nation that I saw in 2015, 2016," Goebel continues. "I felt the nation needed a moral correction, and it wasn't happening."

"Kill Dick" tackles serious topics – the OxyContin -fueled opioid epidemic, a secret society of wealthy powerbrokers, the wild west of sketchy rehab centers, among them – and wraps them inside a murder mystery.

Set in 2016, 19-year-old Susie drops out of NYU to come home to Brentwood and pop pills by the pool. When the drug haze occasionally lifts, Susie follows the bizarre serial killings of homeless opioid addicts in Los Angeles and fights with her father, attorney for Dick Sickler, whose pharmaceutical firm is largely responsible for the nation's drug epidemic.

In South Los Angeles, Susie's former NYU professor has reinvented himself as a drug rehab operator. He's changed his first name to Peter in tribute to his addict brother, who's gone missing in the city, and adopted the last name of Holiday as a joke about his new life in the Southern California sun: Peter Holiday.

As the murders continue, Susie and Peter and his assistant Royal Lee orbit each other until the slow-burning fuse of the mystery erupts in the final pages.

"I wanted to find a story that would help me do a serious book, not just a dark satire, but also makes you think about these systems," Goebel says of the ways in which the opioid epidemic was able to claim tens of thousands of lives in the United States every year.

"A story that makes people feel less alone, less confused, more able to say, OK, here's an example," he says. "It's like here's a clear example of some misdoings, some questionable ethics, that led to a lot of dead people.

"In some ways, it's a Sophoclean dilemma. Like, 'You know what happened to your loved one; what are you going to do about it?'"

Goebel and novelist Ottessa Moshfegh married in 2018, and the pair have collaborated on film projects. Several weeks after this interview, Moshfegh announced on social media that they are currently separated.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Q: How much did the book change over four drafts?

A: It's vastly different. The first draft was incredibly experimental in terms of the prose style. I don't think I've ever read a novel that goes from first person into third, back into first. [The technique, used for Susie's part of the novel, remains in the final version.] That was a discovery that happened at the end.

Red Hen Press / TNS

But the first version of this book was just a mess that I wrote on typewriters and was the worst type of fragile male prose writing of just all these complaints. [He laughs] It was this jeremiad of, like, "I know things!" And all of that had to go aside from the impetus and a few choice lines.

I wrote the book four times, and it wasn't until the last one that I really got to the humor. There was already this sort of more classical literary style and these more ornate sentences that are doing three different things at once, and some of the playfulness and the provocative and the prurient and the spiritual kind of call to care for the least of the people.

But it wasn't until the last one that surprises happened. Like I wrote Sickler into scenes and he was funny. I was like, "Oh man, I've betrayed myself!" Like I was supposed to get vengeance, and I actually can't stop laughing at this guy, even though it's so awful that he is so disturbed he will cut his own family out of his will forever because of a drawing that a child has done.

Q: What's the drawing?

A: He sees a swirl that his granddaughter drew, and he thinks that it's about him being a minotaur or [part of] some kind of evil society of child eaters. Which is tongue in cheek to the whole blood libel of the 2016 election that I was talking about, and the secret society preoccupation the book has. [Ed. note: In 2016, a conspiracy theory known as "Pizzagate" falsely claimed that children were being exploited by Democratic politicians in the basement of a Washington D.C. pizza parlor.]

But I found him funny, and I found a lot of things in the book funny. And I have to remind myself that, "Oh, right, this is a really serious book that has elements of wanting to expose the unethical and disastrous greed that a family and their company enacted on the world.

When you start to write something that takes this many people's experiences into account, I ended up inadvertently having more empathy for everyone. It's just like, "God, you know, not that I forgive them, but everybody's just a little bit crazy from a world that's really crazy.

Q: Let's talk about Los Angeles as the setting for the story. When and how did you move here?

A: I grew up in a small town in Ohio. I moved to Portland, Oregon, when I was 11. I broke my femur. I got addicted to morphine. I ended up addicted to pills and alcohol. I became an addict at a very young age. I'm sober now.

My brother and I were both addicts. He died, I lived. I came to Southern California for the first time to rehab in Palm Springs. It was right next to Melvyn's at the Ingleside Estate. We stayed there, Ottessa and I, when our house almost burned down in the desert.

Q: Where in the desert?

A: After my brother died, he left me about $75,000 from his work insurance policy. I figured he'd want me to share that with our only other sibling, our sister. We were both broke, and we looked at Joshua Tree and ended up in Landers in the last house before the Twentynine Palms Marine bombing range.

Then she took over with a cat and a boyfriend, and I had to move. I ended up buying a place in this neighborhood called Snow Creek, where Timothy Leary lived. Eric Burdon and the Animals lived there. Leonard Cohen had a house there, one of 100 in the world that revolved on a motor. It's just a weird little neighborhood of artists. At least it was.

I was teaching at UC Riverside. Ottessa's book "Homesick for Another World" was coming out. The LA Review of Books asked if I wanted to interview her. I started ham-fistedly emailing her bad emails like, "You think maybe we could get together in person? I'm just out here in the desert."

So I interviewed her. It was our first conversation ever, and I never left the interview. We stayed together after like a week. I was like, "Maybe I should go home." She's like, "I don't want you to." Then we were engaged within like four or five weeks, and that began my life, really, in L.A.

Q: How have you come to know it – as a place to live, a place to write about?

A: My feelings about L.A. are that it's such an interesting place to set a novel because it's in direct communication with the whole world. You look at a San Francisco noir or a San Francisco novel. Its tendrils are usually pretty short reaching. It's a small network of people that affect one another. You look at L.A., and you get the octopus.

Just the power of this town is incredibly immense, and the ability to tell a story that reaches so far into the psyche and hearts of America.

But I also think it's a very difficult town to talk about because it's so stratified. I mean, how do you talk about L.A. without talking about the L.A. that is [entertainment] industry, the L.A. that is non-industry, the L.A. that's West Side, the L.A. that's East Side. They're so incredibly different. Downtown and Skid Row, Compton and Pasadena.

Q: We've talked about how it changed, and the book does have a lot of different pieces: a bit of noir, philosophy, art and literature criticism, humor and outrage. How'd you find the balance point for all that?

A: It was hard work for me, which maybe is a strike against me or something, that it takes so long and so much work. Because, you know, Ottessa, she writes a book in a couple of years, and I think Bret [Easton Ellis] serialized "The Shards," which was an influence on this. I told him that.

It is for me like self-doubt and fear and surety that it's all going to be a failure and I'm going to walk away with nothing. It's just a gambler's dilemma that I just keep going and going.

But this really was a book that had no road map. I didn't know what I was doing. I didn't know where I was going. I can't believe it came together. All I can see is that I learned a lot from living with Ottessa. I learned a lot from writing films together. [Goebel and Moshfegh cowrote the screenplays for "Causeway" and for the adaptation of her novel "Eileen."]

But I think part of it is just a reflection of the life that I've lived, that I have all these elements inside of myself. They are all characters from my psyche, and it's like a Shakespearean drama made up of different versions of myself.

Q: When you finished the book, having climbed this mountain for the last 10 years, where did you feel you were in terms of the hard things you'd gone through in life that inspired this?

A: I mean, as somebody who's been in two mental institutions and four rehabs and five jail cells – and gone off a cliff at 65 and had guns drawn on me – my nervous system isn't just like, "Oh good. Now I feel relief." I'm still doing this book in a very non-traditional manner.

I'm managing a team of like six people, so it's just madness. Every moment I'm getting a text, every moment there's a crisis, every moment somebody wants to know about this item of merch or this item of swag or this bookstore. That's just on the smallest level.

Then there's the PR teams and the marketing teams and this woman who's doing these videos that I'm making, my own kind of madcap "Luke Likes Glue" stories on social media. The stuff I'm doing on social media is insane. And now the book is in production, early development, to be a series.

So I don't even think like I've gotten a chance [to reflect on it]. I think it'll be different when I see the book on shelves. That's the real moment.

Q: I'm sure that'll feel great.

A: But to answer the question from an emotional place, for the first three-and-a-half drafts of the book, the character Peter Krolik, who is [inspired by] my brother in the book, he's only the body in the freezer. He was never alive on the pages. So that was a surprise to get to go into his consciousness [when Goebel decided to make him a living character].

That's one of my favorite chapters in the book. So getting to have him back and having that catharsis of being with my brother while I was writing that chapter, you know, I was crying. I was like, "Man, I get to be with him again. That's cool."

BESTSELLERS

Here are the bestsellers for the week that ended Saturday, May 16, compiled from data from independent and chain bookstores, book wholesalers and independent distributors nationwide, powered by Circana BookScan.

Hardcover fiction

1. A Parade of Horribles. Matt Dinniman. Ace
2. Yesteryear. Caro Claire Burke. Knopf
3. Broken Dove. Dani Francis. Del Rey
4. The Fourth Option. Carr/Woodward. Atria/Bestler
5. Our Perfect Storm. Carley Fortune. Berkley
6. The Calamity Club. Kathryn Stockett. Spiegel & Grau
7. 26 Beauties. James Patterson. Little, Brown
8. Fury Bound. Sable Sorensen. Requited
9. The Last Mandarin. Penny/Fung. Minotaur
10. Starside (deluxe ed.). Alex Aster. Avon

Hardcover nonfiction

1. Suicidal Empathy. Gad Saad. Broadside
2. Strangers. Belle Burden. Dial
3. Dig In! Erin O'Brien. Simon Element
4. Birth Vibes. Jen Hamilton. Grand Central
5. Take Me to Your Leader. Neil deGrasse Tyson. Simon Six
6. The Mission Generation. Gupta/Fewer. Wiley
7. The Case for America. Bret Baier. Mariner
8. Famesick. Lena Dunham. Random House
9. Dogs, Boys, and Other Things I've Cried About. Isabel Klee. Morrow
10. The U.S. Constitution. Melissa Murray. 37 Ink

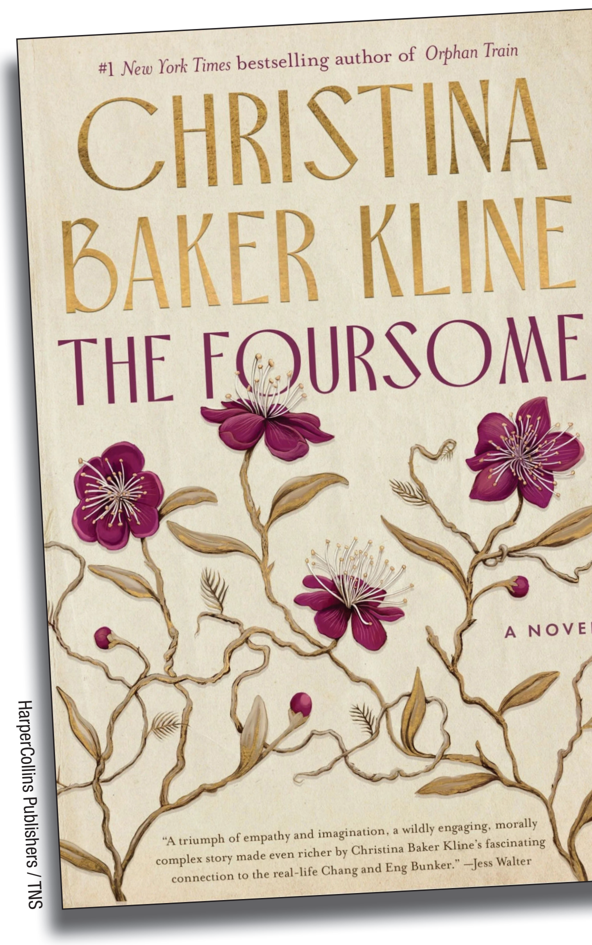
Trade paperback

1. Theo of Golden. Allen Levi. Atria
2. Jujutsu Kaisen, Vol. 30. Gege Akutami. Viz
3. Dungeon Crawler Carl. Matt Dinniman. Ace
4. The Daisy Chain Flower Shop. Laurie Gilmore. HarperCollins
5. Money Unlocked. John Lee Hay. House Business
6. Rules for the Summer. Meghan Quinn. Bloom
7. Game On. Navessa Allen. Slowburn
8. King of Gluttony. Ana Huang. Bloom
9. Remarkably Bright Creatures (media tie-in). Shelby Van Pelt. Ecco
10. First and Forever. Lynn Painter. Berkley

Reprinted from Publishers Weekly.

REVIEW

Conjoined twins and a pair of sisters are 'The Foursome'



HarperCollins Publishers / TNS

By CHRIS HEWITT
The Minnesota Star Tribune (TNS)

Despite its title's promise of eroticism, "The Foursome" is about as un-kinky as a book can get.

Christina Baker Kline's novel was inspired by the true story of Chang and Eng Bunker, the conjoined twins from Thailand who became a sensation when they toured the U.S. in the 1800s. The twins have been the subject of several books, both nonfiction ("Inseparable," by Yunte Huang) and fiction ("Chang and Eng," by Darin Strauss). But Kline takes a different tack, focusing on the Bunkers' marriages to North Carolina sisters Addie and Sarah Yates.

The appeal of the book, which is narrated by Sarah, is how skillfully Kline straddles the divide between the rarity of the conjoined brothers and the conventionality of their marriages. "Here's the truth," Sarah writes at the beginning. "Even the most extraordinary life feels ordinary when you're living it."

Kline has Sarah, who is sheltered even by 19th century standards, connect the extraordinary world of the brothers with the huge changes brought about by a marriage, any marriage: "How strange marriage is even in the most ordinary of circumstances. One day you're living separate lives, in separate houses, barely allowed to speak or touch, and the next you're yoked together for life."

There's nothing prurient about the way she does it but Kline imagines for us the details of life with conjoined twins: sleeping arrangements (each sister had her own room but would go to their brother's side of the bed on alternating days), communication (Sarah finds that the only way to tell Eng something without Chang knowing is via secret notes), even the work on the families' farm, where the brothers' two-ax method of chopping down trees is the envy of their neighbors.

Kline provides just enough of that detail, along with references to rapidly moving current events, to convince us that she knows what she's talking about (and, in fact, the Yates sisters are distant ancestors of hers). But this is really Sarah's book.

The author of historical fiction including "Orphan Train" and " A Piece of the World " occasionally veers into modern-day psychoanalysis of her characters. But, for the most part, her portrait of Sarah convincingly captures what it would be like to be a woman with few options, a woman whose family has enslaved people and who is beginning to understand how wrong that is (partly because she herself feels constricted), a woman who is learning that her entire life was built on the backs of people she barely noticed.

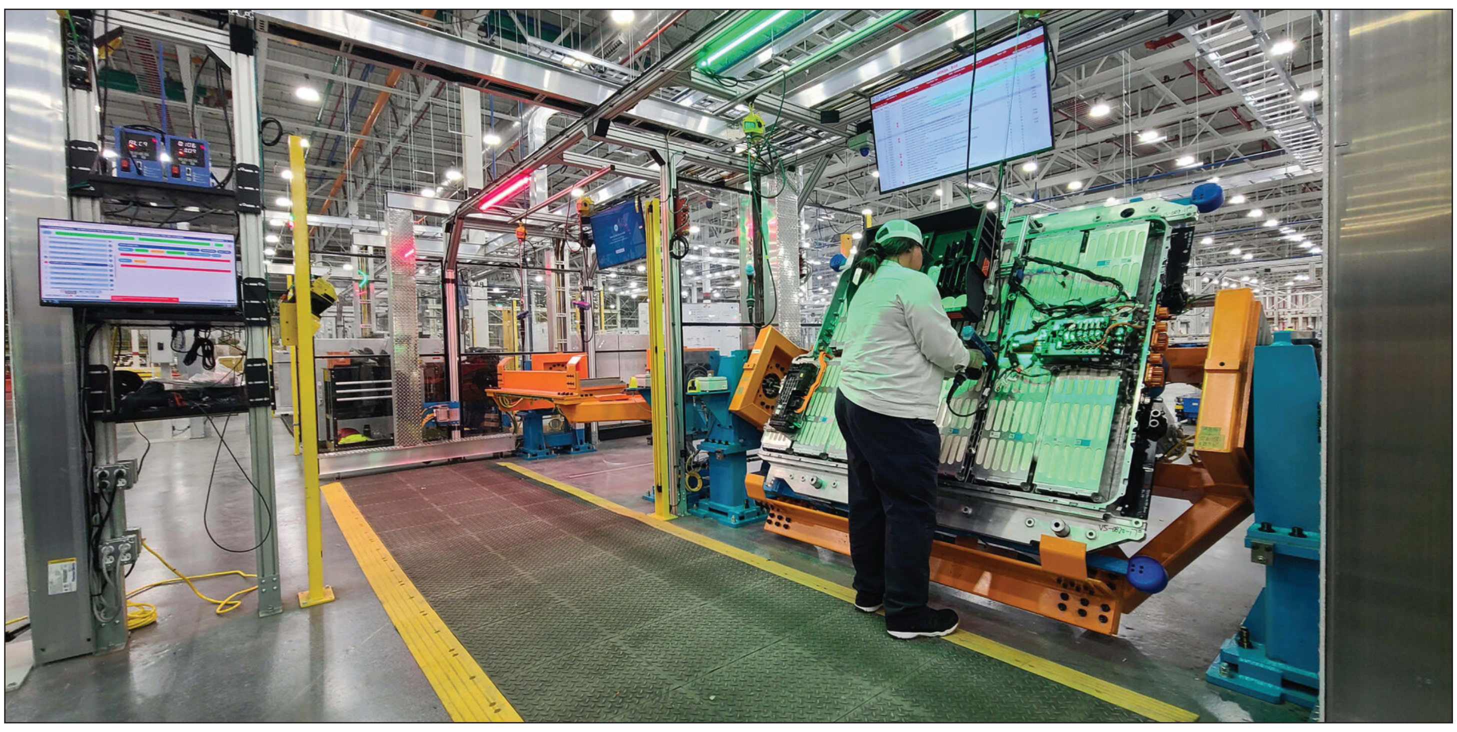
Little is known about the Yates sisters, so most of what we learn is invented by Kline. She has more to go on with the brothers, who were among the most famous people in the U.S. for a time, but the behavior she imagines for them also is compelling – helping us understand, for instance, how brothers who were exploited by P.T. Barnum and others could turn around and exploit the humans they bought and sold. (For more on how the peculiar institution of slavery twisted people's morals into knots, I highly recommend Edward P. Jones' monumental, Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, "The Known World.")

By the end of "The Foursome," Sarah realizes that the life she has characterized as "ordinary" was anything but. Kline depicts good times and bad times for her main character, who learns a lot over the course of the decades covered in "The Foursome" and who, after the Civil War, finds herself well-prepared for a brave new world.

AUTOMOTIVE

From Ohio EV Hub to Indy 500, how Honda plans to right the ship

By HENRY PAYNE
The Detroit News (TNS)



Henry Payne / The Detroit News / TNS

A Honda associate assembles an EV battery pack at the Honda EV Hub in Marysville, Ohio.

It's been a rough start to 2026 for Honda Motor Co. with its first financial loss in 70 years, an electric vehicle strategy in shambles, and its Formula One team mired at the back of the grid with engine issues.

The Indianapolis 500 is a great place to reset.

The brand is retooling its flexible Ohio factory to produce gas-electric hybrid automobiles and has debuted dramatic-looking concepts to accelerate its hybrid lineup already pregnant with hybrid versions of its best-selling CR-V, Civic and Accord products. Now comes this weekend's Indianapolis 500, the Super Bowl of North American motorsports, in the nick of time to showcase proven Honda hybrid tech at America's greatest race.

On pole? Honda driver and 2025 Indy 500 winner Alex Palou.

"Racing has always been a proving ground for Honda technologies," said Vice President for Sales of Honda America Lance Woelfer in an interview ahead of the Memorial Day weekend. "Our commitment to racing series that employ hybrid power units gives us a visible, credible way to demonstrate the link between road and track, particularly as we advance electrified technologies."

Honda has coordinated the racing weekend with the launch of a multi-channel "Relentless Spirit" a campaign starring Honda's hybrid lineup – Civic, Accord, CR-V and Prelude – sharing the road alongside winning race machines, including hybrid IndyCars.

"Honda applies race-proven engineering across its lineup of production vehicles, including its advanced hybrid models that benefit from technologies developed in the company's championship-winning IndyCar and Formula 1 powertrains," Honda said with the release of the ad campaign.

With 40 percent of its global sales in the United States (Honda holds 14 percent of its home market), Honda is the fourth best-selling brand here (8 percent of market) after Toyota, Ford and Chevrolet. It invests heavily in American sport, including as the official auto sponsor of the U.S. Olympic Team, the National Hockey League – and IndyCar. Honda and Chevrolet are the exclusive hybrid powertrain sources for the series, meaning a three-hour infomercial in front of the 500's 7 million TV viewers.

Honda is also a manufacturing colossus in Ohio, Indiana and Alabama, where it produces over 1.5 million vehicles a year (including its luxury Acura brand), employing 30,000 people with a total U.S. investment of over $25 billion.

So central is the U.S. to Honda's global success that it invested $5 billion in its so-called EV Hub sprawling across multiple mid-Ohio manufacturing facilities in what was to be an international showcase for the brand's electric vehicle transformation.

Building momentum like a Beethoven crescendo, Honda introduced its radical 0 Series (0 for zero carbon dioxide emissions) vehicles across two Consumer Electronics Shows in Las Vegas and the Japan Mobility Show in Tokyo only to see consumer and government support dry up – extinguishing the EV dreams of Honda, internally referred to as the company's Second Founding, with it.

And extinguishing Honda's hard-earned reputation as a profit engine. The $15 billion EV write-off echoed other industry titans like Ford Motor Co. and Stellantis NV, but it caused Honda's first annual loss since the company went public in 1957.

Honda is pivoting quickly to hybrids (the latest trend in gasoline powertrains using electric motors to assist the gas engine like turbochargers), in part thanks to the EV Hub's flexible, nonunion assembly lines.

"We created the EV Hub in Ohio with flexibility in mind and the ability to respond to the needs of our customers," said Woelfer. "We retooled our production facilities to build internal combustion, hybrid and battery-electric vehicles on the same line, giving us the ability to adjust quickly to changes in customer needs and market conditions."

Scrap the EVs, plug in the hybrids.

"Car companies need to be nimble than ever before," said veteran iSeeCars.com analyst Karl Brauer. "We've just seen how quickly market forces and regulatory requirements can shift. Any aspect of vehicle production that slows an automaker's response time is a competitive disadvantage, and this includes union plants with contracts that hamper an automaker's ability to pivot quickly."

So instead of an electric 0 Series SUV, Saloon sedan, and Acura RSX, Honda rolled out prototypes for next-gen Honda Accord and Acura RDX hybrids on May 13. The concepts preview 15 new hybrid models by 2030, most of them targeted for the U.S. market. Not as radically-designed as their EV brethren, they represent a slower evolution to what Honda is still convinced is an all-EV future.

"Our dealers have expressed appreciation for how we built flexibility into our production plans, which future-proofs our ultimate transition to battery-electric vehicles," said Woelfer. "That feedback has reinforced our decision to accelerate hybrid production and sales."

Core to the brand is affordability. While U.S. domestic automakers have abandoned entry-level, affordable sedans, Honda has doubled down with its compact Civic and midsize Accord sedans both starting at under $30,000. They are key to attracting first-time buyers to the brand.

The "Relentless Spirit" hybrid racing ad campaign also leans into Honda's claim as the most fuel-efficient full-line automaker in the U.S., according to the Environmental Protection Agency. Honda gas-electric hybrid sales set a company record for the third straight year in 2025, topping 400,000 units.

"As customers face economic pressure, they're looking for brands that provide real value for money," said Woelfer. "Offering well-equipped, fuel-efficient sedans at accessible price points is central to our customer-focused approach to business."

Racing is the antithesis of affordability, but it is also core to Honda's performance-oriented brand.

The Japanese company has gain outsized renown in global motorsports for its success in everything from motorcross to Formula One. Which is why the 2026 season has been so jarring for Honda.

On paper, F1's new 50-50 hybrid powertrain aligned perfectly with Honda's brand, but it has been a flop in reality, with the Honda-powered Aston Martin team mired at the back of the pack.

"It's a disaster," said long-time F1 commentator Will Buxton. "This is the year that was supposed to be the one. The Adrian (Newey-designed) car, the Honda engine, (team owners) pinned everything on the regulation change this year. This was the year that they came to fight, and they're not."

Analyst Brauer is skeptical about the need to make race cars – which run exotic, carbon-fiber chassis, high-downforce wings, and slick tires – relevant to road cars.

"I don't think 'green' technology in pro racing helps sell cars. Most consumers are oblivious to professional racing activity, especially hybrid-buying consumers who are more concerned with fuel efficiency," he said. "For the small number of car buyers who are into racing, most just want the best performance possible, without compromise."

While Honda tries to right the F1 ship, it will welcome this weekend's focus on the Indy 500. The brand's powertrains have excelled here, winning 16 times.

"Racing series like IndyCar and IMSA allow us to connect with passionate fans and reinforce key attributes – performance, reliability and innovation," said Woelfer.

IndyCar racer Palou has dominated IndyCar the last three years, pulling Honda onto the top podium step with him.

Honda hopes that success is a harbinger for sunnier skies ahead.

Henry Payne is auto critic for The Detroit News.

AUTO REVIEW

2027 Kia Seltos Hybrid subcompact SUV offers Telluride-inspired style

By LARRY PRINTZ
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Kia / TNS

There was a time when a man's vehicle said something about him. A pickup truck meant you could haul lumber, tow a horse trailer, or help a friend move a couch without first checking whether the couch had Bluetooth compatibility. A sedan meant you had surrendered to adulthood, but could complain about fuel economy as though discussing the fall of Rome. A sports car meant divorce.

Now American parking lots possess rows of identical SUVs, each one promising rugged individuality while differing from one another only in the shape of its headlights and the font used on the tailgate. And for American men, whose egos remain strangely entangled with machinery, this presents a subtle crisis.

Into this landscape rolls the redesigned 2027 Kia Seltos, a subcompact SUV that borrows its squared-off looks from the larger, wilderness-ready Kia Telluride, although its true wilderness is the Trader Joe's parking lot. Underneath the 2027 Kia Seltos is a shared architecture from the Kia Niro, K3, and K4, an uncomfortable reminder that what is marketed as individuality is, in fact, a transportation module with different costuming.

The Seltos now shows up with a powertrain lineup that finally feels like it's trying to speak to everyone in the room. You still get the familiar 147-horsepower 2.0-liter four-cylinder, and the 190-horsepower turbocharged 1.6-liter for those who like their errands done with a bit more attitude, but now there's a hybrid in the mix too.

And it's hard not to notice the timing. Gas prices keep doing their slow, steady climb and buyers are watching monthly costs the way they used to watch horsepower figures. Into this reality, Kia drops a refreshed Seltos priced less than $30,000, and, almost casually, adds a hybrid option that suddenly makes the whole package feel very of-the-moment. It offers 154 horsepower with front-wheel drive, and 179 horsepower with all-wheel drive through a dual-clutch automatic transmission.

The hybrid, in particular, delivers its combined output with an unembarrassed competence that makes freeway merging feel less like a negotiation with fate. It's certainly the one you want, assuming your financial planner, spouse, or remaining economic optimism allows it. The hybrid delivers power instantly and smoothly. The steering is light on its feet and quick to respond, making parking lots feel easy and city streets feel manageable. Still, a bit more road feel would help it speak more clearly through your hands.

The transmission is generally well-mannered, shifting smoothly and without fuss, until the moment you ask for more urgency and it briefly seems to blink, as if it hadn't realized the conversation had turned serious. The hybrid system, by contrast, does its job with admirable calm, slipping between gasoline and electric power in a way that mostly disappears into the background.

And then there's the steering-wheel paddles that refuse to stick to one identity. In Sport mode, they behave like traditional shift paddles, letting the driver play at being involved. In Eco mode, they change character entirely, adjusting regenerative braking instead, as if the car has decided that efficiency and engagement are just different moods of the same idea.

And yet the Seltos succeeds because it avoids the exhausting fake sportiness infecting so many modern vehicles. The Kia takes a more civilized approach. It's responsive enough to keep a driver interested while remaining quiet, comfortable, and composed over bad pavement, potholes, and the general collapse of American infrastructure. It inspires confidence.

In other words, the Seltos is balanced, which is than you can say about cable TV news or Congress.

The cabin itself is spacious, comfortable, and intelligently arranged. Nothing inside suggests opulence, but neither does anything feel offensively cheap or disposable. It's practical, thoughtfully designed, ergonomically coherent, quietly refined. The now-mandatory horizontal touchscreen and head-up display, ambient lighting, heated and ventilated seats, synthetic leather upholstery, and enough chunky, beige horizontal lines to evoke Scandinavian furniture. The touchscreen now handles wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, which means fewer cords and fewer moments spent fishing around the console like you're defusing a small bomb. More importantly, Kia retained actual physical buttons and an audio volume knob. In an industry obsessed with burying basic functions beneath 17 layers of submenus, this feels like industrial courage.

The new 2027 Kia Seltos Hybrid proves to be remarkably polished. Styled with just enough Kia Telluride attitude to hint at wilderness adventures, it quietly performs a clever sleight of hand: selling the image of freedom and rugged capability while actually delivering an efficient, thoughtfully designed crossover with wireless Apple CarPlay. That makes it far more useful.

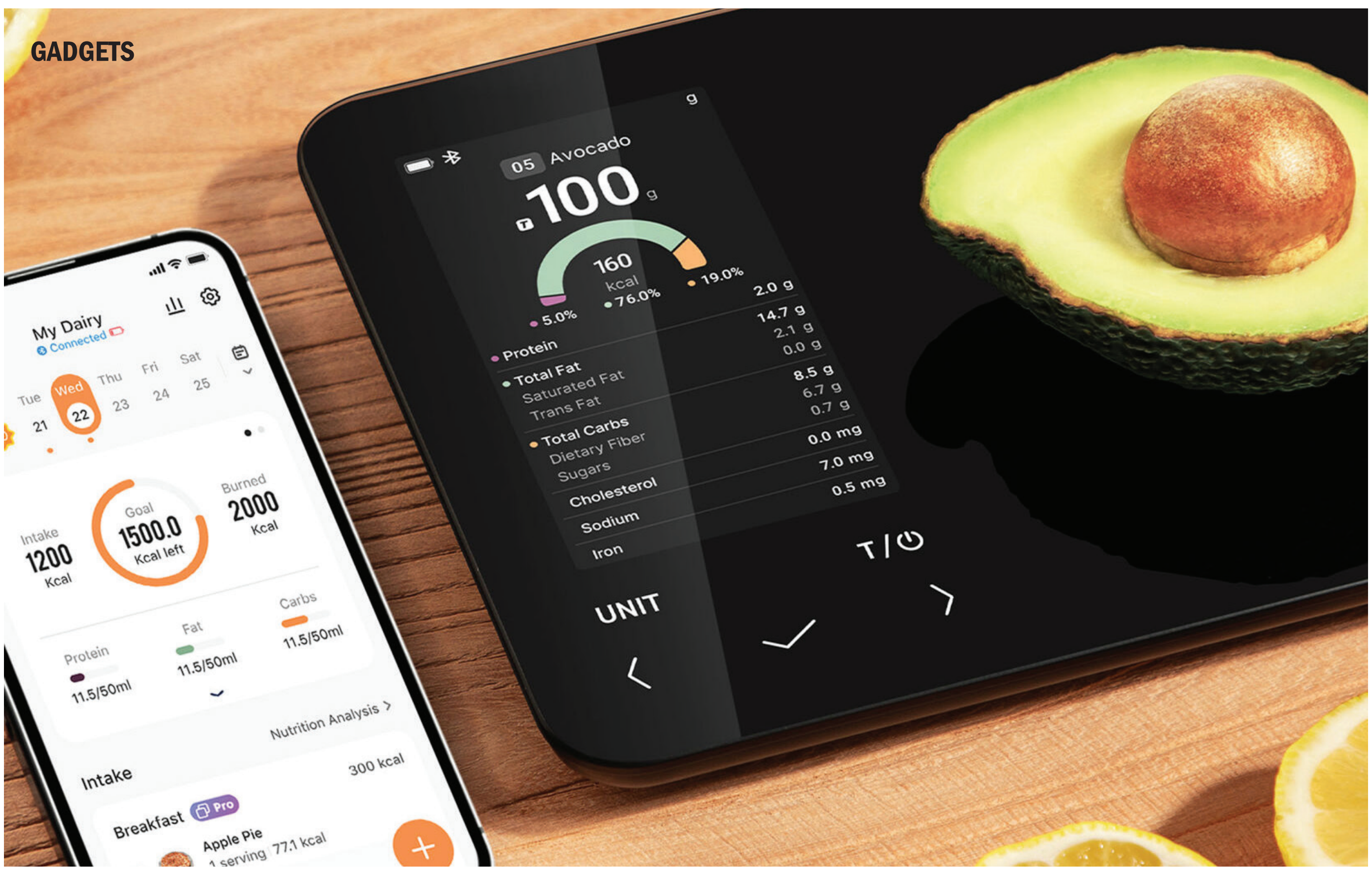
Few SUV buyers chase off-road adventure. They want a painless commute, a comfortable cabin, seamless phone connectivity, and a vehicle that starts every morning without drama. And that, ultimately, is the Seltos' real talent.

Look for it when it goes on sale in the fourth quarter of this year.

Larry Printz is an automotive journalist based in South Florida.

TECHNOLOGY

GADGETS



Photos provided / Cosori / TNS

The Cosori NutriLens smart nutrition scale.

Kitchen game changers

By GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Cosori's NutriLens smart nutrition scale and its Iconic 6.5-quart stainless-steel smart air fryer are kitchen game changers.

Testing these over several weeks of home-cooked meals – led by my wife – delivered impressive results. For example, in the past, we've made chicken Parmesan in a few different air fryers, and some turned out great; we even thought they were perfect. That changed quickly once we saw and tasted what the Iconic air fryer could do.

But first the scale, since that comes first in the equation of meal prep, followed by cooking and eating. We have been eating healthier for many years now, but still often overeat. The scale is like having an assistant there telling you how much is the right amount, taking the guesswork out of measuring ingredients.

The countertop **NutriLens Smart Nutrition Scale** features a sleek glass top that looks nice on your counter. It measures 9.25 by 6 by 0.75 inches, is charged via USB-C, and has an auto-off function. Both the scale and the Iconic air fryer work with the VeSync companion app.

If you are counting macros, this scale is great. This allows you to track the daily grams of protein, carbohydrates and fats you consume to meet specific goals for weight loss or muscle gain. It comes preloaded with five commonly weighed foods; you can add your own with the app.

The Cosori Iconic Stainless Steel 6.5-Quart Smart Air Fryer.

When placing food on the scale, it will weigh and display 19 essential nutrients, including calories, protein, carbs and fat. I love the tare function because it lets me zero out the scale after each ingredient, so I can add the next ingredient with precise measurements without needing extra bowls, measuring cups or spoons. It weighs foods from 3 grams to 5,000 grams in 1-gram increments and 7 different measuring units.

After you have measured all your ingredients, the app syncs with the scale to calculate your daily food intake and update your progress. It tracks by day, week and month and will even offer personalized advice.

https://cosori.com/collections/accessories/products/nutrilens-smart-nutrition-scale ($49.99)

The **Iconic Stainless Steel 6.5-Quart Smart Air Fryer** may be the best air fryer we have used. As air fryers go, it's eye-catching with its polished stainless steel body. The inside basket and crisper plate are dishwasher safe and feature a PFAS- and BPA-free ceramic nonstick cooking surface.

The award-winning design translates into a long-lasting, corrosion-resistant air fryer with a strong, durable feel and minimal heat on the outside. All controls are on a top-side touchscreen panel for powering on, preheating, proofing, dehydrating, baking, reheating and air-frying. Inside is a DC motor, which is relatively quiet (less than 52dB) and operates over a temperature range of 90 to 450 degrees.

As mentioned, the chicken Parmesan was our first meal, and it actually turned out to be crispy fried chicken. You can use the onboard control panel or the app to set cooking functions, temperatures and times. Once the basket with the cooked food is removed, the air fryer automatically shuts off.

This air fryer is 6.5 quarts, which is a little bigger than the average, and I like that. Others we have used cooked fine, but they were just a bit too small. The app includes a helpful chart that shows the right settings, time and temperature for a wide range of foods.

Chef-created recipes in the app automatically set the cooking settings on the air fryer. This makes it easy to find precise cooking times in seconds, all tailored specifically to this air fryer. The Iconic air fryer is also compatible with Amazon Alexa and Google Assistant.

The NutriLens Smart Nutrition Scale ($49.99) and Iconic Smart Air Fryer ($249) make the perfect pair for healthy, easy cooking meals.

https://cosori.com/products/iconic-air-fryer

Contact Gregg Ellman at greggellman@mac.com. Follow him on Twitter @greggellman.

Should you go all-in on Apple?

By JIM ROSSMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

This week a reader wrote in, "I am 74 and was always on top of most electronics as they evolved, but I have to say the rapid changes are hard to keep up with, and I find myself relying on a couple of my younger, more in-tune adult children when it gets to be too much!

"One of my major problems and 'strategies' has been to keep it simple for myself and my wife. Right or wrong, I 'capitulated' and moved to Apple tech because it seems to have an easier learning curve and less need for tech help. All of my phones are Apple, my wife's table is Apple, and all of our TVs have Apple TV boxes.

"My latest decision to sort out is a 5-year-old Dell laptop. It is the only thing NOT Apple for everyday use, and I am torn regarding the next replacement purchase upgrade.

"1. It is my desktop daily unit used with an external monitor. Nothing fancy: I use Microsoft Office.

"2. Rarely do I take it portable. I would redeploy it to my garage workshop after replacement for backup and other hobby use.

"So, if I stay with my migration strategy to ALL Apple, what are my choices? Would the $599 Neo suffice, or will I need a more robust Mac to handle my daily needs?"

You don't absolutely need to update the Dell just yet. You might be OK with a Windows 11 update and riding it out for a while longer.

If you're really ready for a new laptop, my advice is simple – stay with the Apple ecosystem and buy a MacBook Neo.

There is simply no better option for the price and compatibility with the Apple ecosystem. I'll leave it up to you to pick the $599 or $699 option. Double the storage (256gb vs. 512gb) and a fingerprint reader are the only differences.

You will need to buy a Macintosh-compatible copy of Microsoft Office, which costs $179.

You will also need an adapter to go from the Neo's USB-C port to your existing monitor.

PC-centric people will say a new Dell laptop would already have the needed ports, which is true.

The local Apple stores are Apple's secret weapon. If you have any issues with the Mac, including setup advice, you can just walk in, and they'll be happy to help. For new Mac users and people who need some MacOS tutoring, this advantage should not be overlooked.

Jim Rossman is a tech columnist for Tribune News Service. He may be reached at jrossmantechadviser@gmail.com.

The MacBook Neo.

Apple / TNS

SOUND ADVICE

Powered bookshelf speakers pack visual and sonic punch

By DON LINDICH
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Q: I'm looking to get a pair of powered speakers to play Spotify/Qobuz from my phone and iPad, as well as CDs from my TEAC PD-301 CD player/FM tuner. It's a midsize room (so thinking bookshelf speakers) and I really don't have the space for a receiver and speakers, which is why I am looking at the paired powered speaker options as there seems to have been an audio improvement in these over the years. I would want it to be able to play Bluetooth and also have a connection for the CD player. I have flexibility in price, but am looking in the $300 to $600 range. – G.V., Minneapolis

A. I would check out the new Cambridge Audio L/R S speakers. These high-tech powered bookshelf speakers combine cutting-edge industrial design with high-end sound. I saw and heard them at several audio shows this year and the visual and sonic impact are impressive, and besides the typical wood and black finishes there are also colorful choices such as orange, white, blue and green. (If it was me, I would be daring and get one of the bright colors as they stand out and are beautiful, but you will have to decide upon that yourself.) Cambridge has reported that the colors have been big sellers, so they are obviously on to something.

Jonathan Bushell / Cambridge Audio / TNS

Cambridge Audio L/R S powered speakers.

The speakers have multiple inputs, including optical digital. You can connect your TEAC CD player/FM tuner to this digital input and enjoy both CDs and FM.

The Cambridge L/R S speakers are $549. Given the size of your room, you might want to supplement them with a subwoofer, which is easily done since the L/R S has a connection for a powered subwoofer. I would try them without first to see if you need it, but if you do a $199.98 Dayton Audio CS1000 10-inch powered subwoofer would be a good match. That would bring up the price to about $200, but would give you fantastic full-range sound with a small footprint. Cambridge also has larger L/R speakers that are even more impressive, but starting at over $1,500/pair they are well outside your price range. I will have more about them in an upcoming column, but for now the Cambridge L/R S speakers will serve your needs perfectly (*cambridgeaudio.com*).

Q. You recommended an upgrade to the AT3600L cartridge, by adding the $39.98 CFN3600LE stylus. Is there a similar upgrade for an AT91R cartridge? – J.T., San Jose, California

A. I checked and the CFN3600LE stylus is compatible with your AT91R, which apparently shares the same cartridge body as the AT3600L. Go ahead and buy the CFN-3600LE stylus, you will be very happy with the sonic improvements. The CFN3600LE also requires only 1.8g to 2.5g of tracking force, much less than the 3.5g of the AT91R and AT3600L. Less tracking force means less wear, so your records will last longer.

Something else that came up when I researched your answer is there are literally hundreds of cartridges and turntables that use a variation of the AT3600L, under many different brand names. A full list is found on the CFN3600LE page on lpgear.com. If you own a turntable that is due for a new stylus or you simply want an inexpensive and very meaningful sonic improvement, it's worth checking out to see if your turntable or cartridge is on the list.

Contact Don Lindich at www.soundadvicenews.com and use the "submit question" link on that site.

Dark patterns

on the web are designed to *manipulate you* – why aren't they all illegal?

By GREGORY M. DICKINSON
University of Nebraska-Lincoln; Institute for Humane Studies (The Conversation)

You open a free app to do one simple thing. Before you even start, a full-screen message asks whether you want to try the paid version. The "Start free trial" button is large, bright and hard to miss. The option to keep using the free version is smaller, buried at the bottom. The same prompt appears again tomorrow. And the day after that.

A lot of people look at screens like that and think, "Surely this has to be illegal." We even have a name for them, "dark patterns." They feel pushy. They waste time. They seem designed to wear you down. But in most cases, they are perfectly lawful.

"Dark pattern" is not a legal term with a clear boundary. It is a broad label for digital designs that nudge, pressure, confuse or trap users. As a legal scholar who studies consumer protection and digital design, I think the most important thing for readers to understand is that the label "dark pattern" covers a broad spectrum.

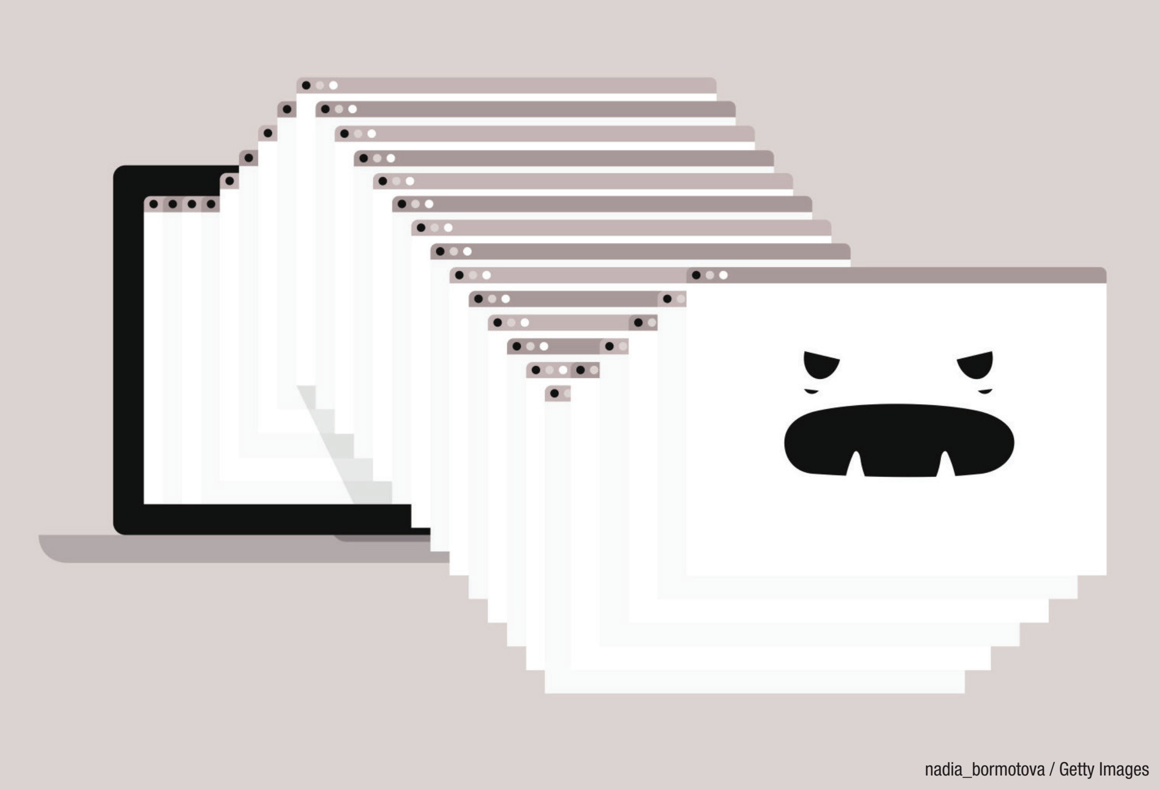
Some of that spectrum is just annoying. Some of it is aggressive salesmanship. And some of it crosses the line into deception or coercion. Federal and state consumer protection laws are mostly aimed at that last category. They do not ban every design choice people dislike, only those that trick or coerce.

Annoying isn't illegal

That reality may sound unsatisfying, but it is not unusual. Offline life is full of things that are irritating but not unlawful. Think of the cashier who asks whether you want to sign up for the store credit card, then points out the discount you are turning down. Most people know exactly what is happening. They roll their eyes, say no and try to shop somewhere else next time.

The same is true online. A repeated pop-up can be obnoxious. A guilt-inducing button can be tacky. But consumers recognize ordinary annoyance for what it is. In many cases, the market answer is simple: Close the app, ignore the pitch or take your business elsewhere.

Similarly, law does not ban persuasive sales pitches just because they are effective. A car salesperson who keeps steering you toward the upgraded model is trying to influence your choice. So is the airline clerk who offers travel insurance. So is the restaurant server who asks whether you want dessert. Salesmanship is nothing new. Digital design often borrows from familiar techniques.


nadia_bormotova / Getty Images

That helps explain why lawmakers cannot simply outlaw "manipulation." And so many interfaces are built to persuade, openly and lawfully.

What crosses the line

What the federal FTC Act and analogous state consumer-deception statutes usually care about is not whether a design is annoying. They focus on whether the design is likely to mislead a reasonable consumer. That is the core idea in modern consumer protection law.

So a design is likelier to be unlawful when it hides key facts, makes an optional choice look mandatory or tricks people about the effect of the button they are pressing. A fake countdown timer, a disguised ad, a misleading one-click purchase button or a cancellation path that looks finished when it is not are all different from ordinary hard selling. Those designs do not just pressure users; they can deceive them.

That is also why the app maker's intent is not always the key question. In many consumer protection cases, a company does not get a free pass just because no one said, "Let's trick people." The legal question is often about effect: What would a reasonable user likely understand from this screen?

Research on dark patterns reinforces that concern. Even relatively mild designs can push people into choices they would not otherwise make. And regulators have increasingly focused on subscription flows, hidden fees and cancellation obstacles for exactly that reason.

Why it feels like dark patterns are everywhere

One reason people might think there are no laws against dark patterns is that they see them so often. But that frequency reflects that the term covers a wide range of conduct, from lawful nagging to outright deception.

It also reflects enforcement limits. Regulators cannot chase every irritating screen on every app and website. They have to prioritize the worst cases. That leaves a lot of borderline conduct in the wild, which makes the whole problem feel bigger and murkier to ordinary users.

So when people ask why there is not a law against dark patterns, the best answer is that there already is, but the law does not prohibit every annoying or high-pressure design. It targets lies, misleading cues and coercive obstacles.

That line can be fuzzy. But the fuzziness is not a mistake. It is what you get when the law tries to separate persuasion from deception in a world full of both.

Gregory M. Dickinson is an assistant professor of law at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts. This article is republished under a Creative Commons license. Read the original article at https://theconversation.com.

Companies are hyping AI the same way they talked up sustainability, but there are ways to fix that

By SUVRAT DHANORKAR
Georgia Institute of Technology (The Conversation)

Aleksandr Durnov / Getty Images

Across corporate earnings calls, investor presentations and marketing pitches, "artificial intelligence" has become the buzzword of choice. Yet a troubling pattern lies under the hype. Many claims vastly overstate actual AI sophistication, misleading people about true capabilities, future outcomes and potential harms.

A case in point is the recent 600 percent share price surge of Allbirds, after the once-trendy sustainable footwear business issued a vague announcement in April 2026 that it would pivot to AI. In the coming months, the company plans to rename itself NewBird AI and give up its status as a public benefit corporation.

As a scholar who studies corporate sustainability, I see parallels between this "AI washing" phenomenon – when companies oversell the benefits of AI while glossing over the risks – and the greenwashing trend in the recent past, when companies claimed to commit to sustainability but didn't enact fundamental change. Widespread deception was rampant, with businesses spending far more on green marketing than on actual sustainability improvements. And those efforts often backfired on both the companies and the communities they served. Even more worrisome: AI washing's rapid rise and widespread adoption will likely eclipse the greenwashing trends.

How we got here

AI washing is thriving because companies and policymakers ignore four important principles. These shortfalls, in the past, also characterized greenwashing.

First, AI guidelines lack standardization. By 2019, 84 sets of AI ethics principles and guidelines had already been published. By 2023, this number had exploded to more than 200 – a mess of voluntary frameworks from companies, research institutions and public organizations.

Making matters worse is that the U.S. currently relies on fragmented AI rules, with most being voluntary. The Trump administration has generally sided with Big Tech to push back efforts at state or federal regulation. At a global level, one of the few exceptions is the European Union AI Act, perhaps one of the most comprehensive frameworks, but its implementation won't be fully phased in until 2027 or later.

In the early 2000s, corporate sustainability faced a similar credibility crisis. Every company measured sustainability differently, making comparisons impossible and greenwashing easy. The breakthrough came only when standardized, industry-specific metrics allowed meaningful benchmarking. Initiatives such as the Global Reporting Initiative and Sustainability Accounting Standards Board established common metrics for measuring environmental impact, social responsibility and quality of governance, known by the shorthand ESG.

When companies must report carbon emissions using the same methodology, for example, or disclose labor conditions using identical categories, investors can compare performance, identify laggards and allocate capital accordingly. This push made comparisons possible and deception harder, although it still wasn't foolproof. For example, a 2023 United Nations Environment Programme report on the fast-fashion industry found that many companies continue to make "vague and inflated" sustainability claims.

Second, there are no comprehensive frameworks in the U.S. that require businesses to judge how AI affects them in a material way and publicly disclose those impacts. Examples of AI-driven material impacts include whether algorithmic bias shapes business outcomes, or whether decisions on how to use AI systems carry significance for shareholders and the public.

Instead, AI governance remains dominated by the narrow inner circle of companies that build the AI systems, while affected communities rarely have a say in determining which AI impacts are material enough to warrant public attention. For example, Big Tech companies like Google, Microsoft, Apple, NVIDIA and others adhere to their own AI governance guidelines, with relatively little public input.

The development of sustainability principles offers some examples of how to build these frameworks. The EU's Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive requires over 50,000 companies to formally evaluate which sustainability topics are material to their stakeholders, and then disclose that information. These efforts try to ensure that accountability is clear across entire supply chains.

While nowhere nearly as comprehensive, U.S. regulations such as the 2010 Dodd-Frank financial reform and California's law requiring reporting on statewide greenhouse gas emissions provide a similar blueprint that U.S. policymakers could build on if they chose.

A third problem is the general lack of third-party verification, making AI washing trivially easy. Effective disclosure means reporting all material impacts – not just cherry-picked successes.

In practice, AI audits can vary dramatically in rigor, scope and methodology. One auditor might conduct extensive testing across demographic groups, analyze decision-making and validate the quality of training data. Another might simply review documentation and accept company explanations at face value. Given the variety of AI auditing models out there, different auditors may use incompatible methodologies, making results impossible to compare. If companies adopted third-party accreditation systems to assess how they use AI, they would help ensure the accountability that self-reported claims cannot match.

By contrast, there was reasonable progress in this respect as companies adopted ESG principles. For example, institutions such as the Carbon Disclosure Project and Global Reporting Initiative have a network of partners that offer independent verification. These providers, certified under international standards, verify corporate sustainability data against rigorous criteria. That way, they provide the assurance that lets companies show the progress needed to unlock sustainable finance and mitigate legal risks. Third-party audits are far from perfect, but they offer a clear path for improvement.

The fourth principle is robust enforcement. Early ESG initiatives relied on reputational pressure and stakeholder goodwill – things that corporations routinely ignored when profits were at stake. When change came, it was because regulations established legal liability and financial penalties.

These consequences changed how corporations assess risk and continue to shape sustainability practices today. Volkswagen's 2015 "Dieselgate" scandal, for example, cost the company over $30 billion in fines, settlements and criminal charges after U.S regulators found that the carmaker was cheating emissions tests. BP faced billions in penalties and liabilities for the 2010 Deepwater Horizon disaster, the biggest oil spill in the history of marine oil drilling operations.

The current enforcement gap in AI creates a predictable dynamic. The expected value of AI washing – like potential investment gains, competitive advantage, and market valuation increases – far exceeds the expected cost in terms of penalties and risk of detection. Until enforcement imposes consequences that exceed benefits, AI washing will persist as a rational business strategy rather than a risk to a business's reputation.

Fortunately, investors are beginning to step up. The Federal Trade Commission, for example, launched Operation AI Comply in 2024, targeting deceptive AI claims, although this effort has been partially scaled back by the current Trump administration.

New standards for a new era

Until businesses address these four principles, AI washing will continue. Without standards and audits, even well-intentioned companies can't know if their work meets adequate rigor. Without assessments of material impact, some groups of consumers or shareholders will be hurt. And without liability, even thorough auditors won't be able to identify whether a business's claims about AI are truthful.

These principles, applied broadly, also help explain why greenwashing persists. For example, the lack of universal reporting standards continues to leave some gaps, with data-quality issues persisting even as reporting frameworks emerged. More fundamentally, political buy-in for ESG has diminished significantly, particularly in the U.S., where over 150 bills were introduced across multiple states by 2023 to disincentivize firms from adopting ESG. Major financial institutions – including JP Morgan, State Street, BlackRock and PIMCO – have retreated from their earlier climate commitments amid political pressure as well as antitrust concerns.

This trend shows that even well designed accountability measures require durable political support to succeed. After all, corporate sustainability took more than 25 years to develop from an initial framework to mandatory standards, and it still remains a work in progress. AI, by contrast, is advancing exponentially in terms of its reach and societal impact. There may not be 25 years to catch up – but at least there are lessons from the recent past.

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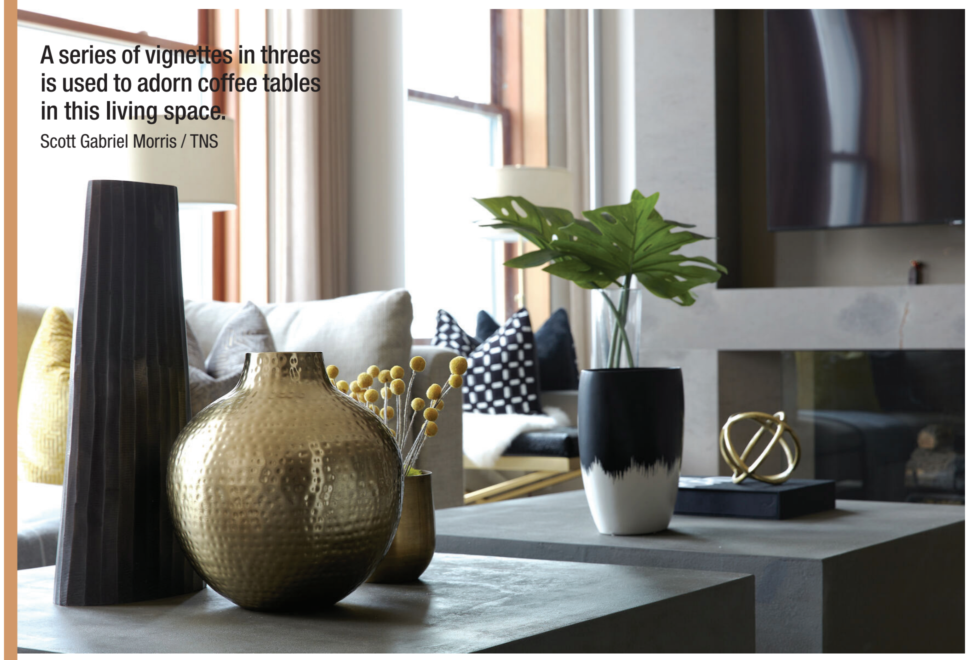
HOME&GARDEN

Shelf "dressing" is an ideal example of a home styling opportunity.
Handout / TNS

Vignettes of accessories help to elevate this living space.
Scott Gabriel Morris / TNS

A vignette of three items adorns an elegant console.
Handout / TNS



A series of vignettes in threes is used to adorn coffee tables in this living space.
Scott Gabriel Morris / TNS

DESIGN RECIPES

Home styling tips

By CATHY HOBBS
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Styling a home is less about the big pieces and more about the final touches, especially the accessories. The most successful spaces feel curated rather than decorated, spacious and open as opposed to overwhelming.

Whether preparing a home for sale or simply refreshing your space, small styling adjustments can make a significant impact. If you're looking for ways to style your space like a design pro, here are some top tips.

1. Edit. Remove excess accessories and furniture. Creating a neutral palette and foundation and then building a design is often a successful approach.

2. Create vignettes of pairs or threes. Accessories styled in pairs or threes feel natural and visually balanced.

3. Vary items including artwork and accessories in height and scale. Mix taller and shorter objects to create dimension and prevent surfaces from feeling flat.

4. Layer your décor. Group items together intentionally rather than spreading them out, allowing each vignette to feel purposeful.

5. Incorporate texture. Use materials such as wood, linen, ceramics and glass to add depth without relying solely on color.

6. Keep color palettes cohesive. Limit your palette to a few complementary tones. A maximum of three colors in a color palette is best.

7. Consider using trays to help to anchor accessories. From trays that are metal to those made of resin, trays can be used on surfaces from bathrooms to coffee tables and consoles, to help elevate a vignette.

8. Balance negative space. Sometimes less is more. Allowing some negative space lets decorative elements be visible and standout.

9. Add organic elements. Fresh flowers, branches or greenery bring life and softness into a room and help balance structured interiors.

10. Take it all in. After styling, take a moment to view the space. Small shifts can make a big difference in achieving balance.

Cathy Hobbs is the owner of Cathy Hobbs Design Recipes, a home staging company based in New York City (www.cathyhobbs.com). She is also the owner of Highland Passive House, a Home Staging + Design Center based in New York's Hudson Valley (www.highlandpassivehouse.com). Cathy's practical, how-to design advice can also be found in her book, "Home Design Recipes."

How can I prep my home for vacation?

Angie Hicks
Ask Angi

When you are on vacation, your home should be out of sight and out of mind. Take a few minutes now to complete my pre-vacation checklist to ensure you don't spend your trip wondering if you took out the trash or set the alarm before you left.

First, focus on your home's security. Lock all your doors and windows, and close your blinds to keep prying eyes from looking into your home while you are away. If you have a garage, make sure that door is fully secure as well. Before you leave, double-check that your security system (alarm, front door camera, etc.) is working properly. It is also a good idea to set up timed lights for your indoor and outdoor spaces to make it less obvious that you are not at home.

Next, take care of any tasks that can help you save energy – starting with turning your thermostat up to 80 to 85 degrees Fahrenheit. Turning your HVAC system off completely can expose your home to extreme temperatures, so 80 to 85 degrees is a great compromise in the summer months. You should also unplug any small appliances, like toasters and coffee makers. These energy-efficient choices can help you lower your energy bill and improve the overall efficiency of your home.

Prep your home for vacation by taking security measures, getting your HVAC system ready, and cleaning your kitchen.
Flynt / Dreamstime / TNS

My third tip is to clean your home before you leave. Take out the trash, throw away any food that might expire, and clear food from your countertops to prevent unwanted pests from moving in. This is also a good time to run your dishwasher and clean your garbage disposal to remove any lingering food debris. If you don't have time to clean your home yourself, bring in a professional cleaning service to ensure your home is clean and ready for your departure.

Finally, if you are planning on taking an extended trip, ask a family member or friend to check on your home while you're away. Having someone come in to water the plants and make sure there are no leaks or other problems can give you some peace of mind while traveling. You can also tell a trusted neighbor about your trip, so they can collect your mail and keep an eye on your home while you are on vacation.

Tweet your home care questions with #AskingAngi and we'll try to answer them in a future column.

Mark Boster / Los Angeles Times / TNS

Radiator Springs comes to life in Cars Land at the Disney California Adventure Park on June 5, 2012, in Anaheim, California. The 12-acre area includes rides, restaurants and themed shops.

How Route 66 inspired Disney's *'Cars'* and *Cars Land* – and the ride that never came to be

By TODD MARTENS
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

Christopher Reynolds / Los Angeles Times / TNS

Cadillac Ranch, an artwork made from 10 old cars by the Ant Farm artists' collective in the 1970s, has become one of Amarillo, Texas' top attractions. Visitors are invited to add their own spray-painted touches.

Mark Boster / Los Angeles Times / TNS

Mater's Junkyard Jamboree brings the rusty, old tow truck character from the "Cars" movie to life in Cars Land in the Disney California Adventure Park in Anaheim, California on June 5, 2012.

LOS ANGELES — Route 66 has its tendrils throughout SoCal, and especially in the L.A. area, winding through Pasadena, West Hollywood and culminating in Santa Monica. But the most loving ode to Route 66 may in fact be at the Disneyland Resort, specifically at Disney California Adventure.

Cars Land opened in 2012 as part of a reworking of the theme park and at long last gave it a striking land that could rival – and in many cases surpass – those of its next-door neighbor, Disneyland. Flanked by sun-scarred, reddish rocks that look lifted from Arizona, Cars Land is a marvel of a theme park land, with its backdrop mountain range ever so slightly nodding to the fins of classic Cadillacs from 1957 to 1962. That design element is a salute to the Cadillac Ranch in Amarillo, Texas, where 10 vintage Cadillacs are buried nose-first in the ground that to many resembles a 20th century Stonehenge.

Yet before the area was attached to the 2006 film, it was envisioned as a theme park destination dedicated to roadside attractions and trips along the so-called Mother Road. Cars Land is a make-believe area based on a fictional town from an animated film, but its roots are decidedly real.

"We very much acknowledge that up front, that you're walking down Route 66," says Kathy Mangum, the retired Walt Disney Imagineer who served as the executive producer of Cars Land.

"But you're also not walking down a part of Route 66 that exists anywhere," Mangum continues. "There's no part of Route 66 where you're looking up at a Cadillac range surrounded by red rocks. It's the spirit of Route 66. I wouldn't even call it a 'best-of.' It's just a little bit of this, a little bit of that, and combined it feels real."

Before those at Walt Disney Imagineering, the secretive arm of the company devoted to theme park experiences, were even aware that Pixar Animation Studios was working on the "Cars" film, an automotive-focused land was in the planning stages for Disney California Adventure. The park had opened in 2001 and had struggled in its early years to pull in crowds, with audiences zeroing in on a lack of Disneyland-style attractions and an absence of generally designed vistas.

In an effort to rejuvenate the park, then-Imagineer Kevin Rafferty envisioned an area to be called Car Land – without the "s" – pulling heavily from his family's road trips and Route 66-like roadside attractions and oddities. Among its standout attractions was to be one initially named Scoot 66, later changed to Road Trip, USA, a slow-moving ride that took guests on a cross-country journey through nature and roadside quirkiness, although its showcase scene would have been a trip trough a miniaturized Carlsbad Caverns, a bit of a detour from Route 66.

"It was kind of tongue-in-cheek," says Rafferty, now retired, of the never-built ride. "You were going to be seeing all these roadside attractions that would draw you in, like giant bunnies."

Rafferty believed a place such as Car Land would be ripe for exploration in a Disney park, as it was to be set from the late 1950s to the early 1960s and tap into a collective nostalgia for a time when a vehicle meant the freedom to explore the open road. Cars Land today still has some of that ageless energy, boasting a vintage rock 'n' roll soundtrack and a strip of a street filled with colorful neon, its lights, especially at night, beckoning guests to come closer.

"The reason why I thought it would fit into a Disney park, especially Disney California Adventure, is because cars are so much a part of the California story," Rafferty says. "Cars are designed in California, even though they're built elsewhere. There's more custom shops in California. There's more design studios in California. There's more car clubs. And all the cars songs. 'She's so fine, my 409.' It was all the Beach Boys and Jan and Dean."

Development on Rafferty's Car Land idea would change course when Imagineering and Pixar eventually aligned. But it was also a shift that would more formally ground the area in the culture of Route 66, which heavily influenced the film. Both the filmmakers and, later, those with Imagineering, embarked on 10-day research trips along the road led by historian Michael Wallis, author of "Route 66: The Mother Road." Those at Pixar, in fact, were so charmed by Wallis' tours that the author was asked to voice the role of the film's sheriff.

Wallis says he took the teams out in rented Cadillacs. "I like to stop every 300 yards," Wallis says. "If I'm doing a road trip, I get into it. So we stopped to move box turtles off the road. I waded them into winter wheat to dance, to pick wild grapes. I introduced them to people that I guarantee that they never would have met, the great characters of the road, and I showed them the man-made and natural sites of the road."

■■■

Though the fictional "Cars" and Cars Land community of Radiator Springs has no single inspiration, it echoes the scenery and history of several small towns between Tulsa, Okla., and Kingman, Ariz., including Tucumcari, N.M., Seligman, Ariz., and Oatman, Ariz. And the single, graceful bridge that is centered upon the land's backdrop mountain range closely resembles Pasadena's own Colorado Street Bridge, although there's no roaring waterfall next to the original.

Elsewhere, Ramone's House of Body Art connects with the U-Drop Inn, a 1936 Art Deco gas station in Shamrock, Texas, that now serves as a visitor center and cafe. The Cozy Cone Motel nods to the Wigwam motel chain, which once included seven locations from Kentucky to California. Two remain in business along Route 66: the Wigwam in San Bernardino and another in Holbrook, Ariz.

While Imagineers had visual references from the animated film, Mangum says the research trip was invaluable in lending authenticity to the park.

"We could walk into a building in Shamrock, Texas, that looks so much like what Ramone's House of Body Art looks like and see that those tiles are made of raised terra-cotta," Mangum says. "So we could get the actual texture. It's a movie world, but it's also a real world."

Flo's V8 Cafe isn't a direct match with any Route 66 eatery, the Imagineers say, but was certainly influenced in spirit by the Midpoint Cafe in Adrian, Texas.

"We sampled all their pies and food and made copious notes on this stuff," Rafferty says. "The two women who owned the Midpoint Cafe had what they said was their mother's recipe for 'ugly crust pies.' We fell in love with ugly crust pies. I met with the head chef of Disneyland, who was a Frenchman at the time, and I said we wanted to serve ugly crust pies at Flo's V8 Cafe. And he said, 'No, no, no, nothing at Disneyland will be ugly.'"

No, but it may be influenced by abandoned buildings. Mangum says a key locale for the land was the deserted structures of Two Guns, Ariz. Gas station remains led to sketches that would inspire parts of the "Stanley's Oasis" area of the Radiator Springs Racers queue, which Rafferty and company filled out with an oil service station and then a building composed of empty oil bottles. The story goes that Stanley's Oasis is a roadside attraction settlement that led to the development of the town of Radiator Springs.

"That kind of Route 66-inspired story was all made up," Rafferty says. "It wasn't in the film." That backstory, however, would inform the 2012 short "Time Travel Mater."

The enduring strength of the land, however, isn't just due to the popularity of the animated properties that led to it. While Route 66 wasn't magic for everyone – the history of the road is dotted with tales of extreme poverty and horrific racism – it's become romanticized as a slice of Americana and stands as a jump-off point to further delve into our past.

The land is, in a word, timeless. It's also representative of the ideal of a working small town, the sort of place we forever long for. "It may not be the America of today," Mangum says, "but in a way it is."

TRAVEL TIPS

Kirill Kudryavtsev / AFP / Getty Images / TNS

Passengers look at the announcement board showing cancelled flights at Frankfurt Airport in Frankfurt am Main, on April 10 as cabin crews of German airline Lufthansa went on strike over an ongoing labour dispute.

International travel anxiety surges

Experts offer tips for feeling safer

By MIA TAYLOR
TravelPulse (TNS)

Between the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, the prolonged Russia-Ukraine war and persistent cartel-related violence in parts of Mexico, international travelers are feeling a little rattled.

A new survey conducted by the global risk and response company Global Rescue reveals that "virtually no international travelers feel safer in 2026."

Experts at Global Rescue described their latest survey findings as "striking" and said the results underscore "how deeply risk has become embedded in the global travel mindset."

Additional results from the Spring 2026 Global Rescue Traveler Sentiment and Safety Survey include:

- Less than 1 percent of travelers say they are less or much less concerned about their personal safety when traveling internationally.
- 56 percent report being more or much more concerned
- 42 percent say their level of concern has not changed

Overall, the results seem to indicate "a stark divide between rising anxiety and sustained unease," according to Global Rescue.

"Travelers are not seeing improvement in the global risk environment," said Dan Richards, CEO of The Global Rescue Companies. "What we're observing is a split between those who feel conditions are worsening and those who believe risks remain persistently elevated – but almost no one sees the world as getting safer," added Richards.

The divide becomes more pronounced when viewed across gender lines. In particular, 61 percent of women report being more or much more concerned, compared to 53 percent of men, highlighting a higher level of risk sensitivity among female travelers.

Meanwhile, men are more likely to report no change in their outlook, with 45 percent saying their level of concern is unchanged versus 37 percent of women, suggesting a greater degree of normalization among male respondents.

There also geographic differences in the responses, albeit more subtle, but revealing nevertheless.

Among U.S.-based respondents, 56 percent say they are more or much more concerned, closely mirroring the global average, while 41 percent report no change. Among non-U.S.-based respondents, meanwhile, concern is slightly lower but still dominant, with 52 percent reporting increased concern and 45 percent indicating no change.

Global Rescue's experts also pointed out that the absence of any meaningful decline in concern across all segments stands out.

According to the company, the data shows that while travelers may differ on whether risks are increasing or holding steady, there is near-universal agreement that they are not diminishing.

"When nearly half of travelers say their concerns haven't changed – and virtually none say they've decreased – it tells you that elevated risk has become the baseline expectation."

Taken together, the findings point to a global travel environment where elevated risk is no longer episodic – it is expected, concludes survey.

Anxiety plagues international travelers

The experts at travel insurance company Squaremouth told TravelPulse that they too are seeing significant anxiety among travelers. Most notably, when the United States and Israel attacked Iran, the insurance provider experienced an 18-fold increase in customer service calls related to travel in the UAE and Dubai almost immediately.

"We've also seen a 27 percent rise in interest for Cancel for Any Reason insurance coverage since the start of March, which is a reliable signal that travelers want the ability to change plans if conditions worsen," said Chrissy Valdez, senior director of operations for Squaremouth.

Philip Farina, an adviser on hotel security, travel safety and disaster preparedness, says the combination of the conflict in the Middle East, terrorism, riots and protests in locations around the world are causing understandable concern for those who travel internationally.

"The threat environment has increased dramatically. Travelers are certainly worried about heading out to specific locations where there are opportunities for increased incidents," explained Farina, founder and chief security and safety advisor for Risky Business.

In response to such fears, many travelers have been to pushing back travel plans in hopes that the violent events across the globe will be minimized in the future.

Safety measures for those traveling abroad

If international travel is in your future, whether for work or leisure, there are some steps you can take to help ensure a smoother experience, say experts.

Research your destination

First and foremost, experts stress the importance of being informed in advance about wherever you happen to be traveling.

"Know what the geopolitical climate and concerns are for your destination and for any hubs you may be traveling through," says Valdez.

To help with this effort, Farina suggests calling the hotel or Airbnb host ahead of your trip to ask about local conditions. Conducting an internet search about the areas you intend to travel to prior to and during your trip is another good step.

Remain informed while traveling

In addition to doing your research in advance, remain informed as you travel. This effort should include monitoring current events and advisories while traveling.

"Travelers who monitor conditions and advisories tend to feel more confident," continues Valdez. "U.S. travelers should check the website of their nearest U.S. Embassy for resources, and the U.S. State Department website for travel advisories, which are updated frequently."

To help with this effort, consider enrolling in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). This free service allows U.S. citizens and nationals to register their trip abroad with the Department of State. If there's an emergency in the destination you're visiting, such as a natural disaster or civil unrest, the Department of State will send an alert.

Avoid drawing attention to yourself

Also while in destination, avoid wearing any clothing, hats or apparel that supports international conflict or advertises a political party or movement, suggests Farina. And maintain a low profile.

"Stay aware of your surroundings and below the radar when you are out and about" advises Farina.

Know your rights

Finally, in the event that something does go wrong, it's important to understand what rights you have and have a plan.

At the most basic level that includes understanding what compensation or rebooking support may be available during airline delays and cancellations. More on these rights can be found here.

In terms your advance planning for an emergency, travel insurance can provide various benefits. Some of the coverages Valdez recommends for today's world include:

- Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) and Interruption For Any Reason (IFAR): These coverages provide travelers with the flexibility to cancel a trip for reasons not covered under standard plans, such as military action, airspace closures, acts of war, or general fear of traveling.
- Non-medical Evacuation: This benefit allows travelers to leave a destination due to political unrest, natural disasters, or safety concerns, even if there's not a medical emergency.

No matter what type of coverage you're interested in, timing surrounding when you purchase the insurance matters.

"Be sure to shop for it shortly after making your initial trip deposit, so all time-sensitive benefits are available to you," stresses Valdez.